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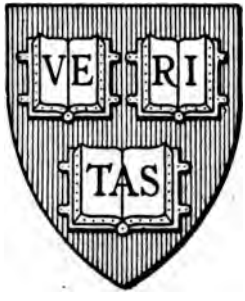

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CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

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CHRISTOPHER KENRICK:

His Life and Adventures.

By JOSEPH HATTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE TALLANTS OF BARTON," "PIPPINS AND CHEESE," ETC.

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CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

PREFATORY.

"I WILL a round unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love."—*Othello.*

I WILL not deceive you, ladies and gentlemen; this is no story of exciting adventures, of moving accidents by flood and field, of most disastrous chances in love and war. Neither a traveller nor a soldier, I have not traversed Arabian deserts, nor led storming parties against impregnable fortresses. You will find in me no hero of romance, bearded like the pard; no occupant of strange disguises; no tall, brown-haired woman-killer, combining the physical proportions of Hercules with the heart of Mantalini.

In all my life I have not fought a duel, nor have I eloped with my neighbor's wife, although I know one man who could not say as much.

A quiet, sober, unpretentious gentleman, I can write a little; I have exhibited several pictures at the Royal Academy; I can play the violin, and I live on my own estate in a west-midland county.

Last year the free and independent electors of the

neighboring borough offered me a seat in Parliament. Mrs. Kenrick is of opinion that I did wrong to decline the honor of inscribing M. P. after my name. She is fortified still further in this by the assurance of a friend from the city of London that he could make these two initials "turn me in" (that is his phrase) two thousand pounds a year. My only reply is, that I have no ambition which a seat in the House of Commons would satisfy, and that I do not wish to make an income in the way suggested by my enterprising friend, at whose offices in the city so many companies have been launched, as if they were intended to be wrecked by the first rough sea which should encounter them. Moreover, the ingratitude of shareholders, when undeserved failure comes, is a rock ahead to be avoided by a peacefully-disposed man; and I know more about fiddlesticks than finance. Mrs. Kenrick rejoins that I might sacrifice my feelings for the sake of the dear children. In the course of a long career I have made several and sundry sacrifices, for these same children. "Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense." Though I round off my reply with this quotation from our favorite bard, with some dramatic action, it is quite enough for Mrs. Kenrick, who, seeing that I am really serious, leaves me in possession of the field and continues her knitting.

Whether I am justified in seeking an audience for [illegible]place a performance as the story of my

life, the reader himself must judge. Mrs. Kenrick has long been of opinion that the career of her husband is a very remarkable chapter in biographical and general history; but she has all the prejudices of a good wife in everything that concerns Mr. Christopher Kenrick.

In the way of a candid and truthful narrative I find some formidable difficulties. Amongst the chiefest is the fear of wounding Mrs. Kenrick's pride, and lowering the dignity of my family, which, by reason of a rural residence, twenty acres of land, and two pairs of horses, has taken what is called a county position. I am given to understand that this endows us with an unmistakable right to snub the best people in the neighboring town, and also entitles us to visit the Right Hon. Slumkey Skiddens, the lord of the manor, the county magistrates, the clergy, and all the other dignitaries of the district; to say nothing of introducing my girls to the Archery and Croquet Clubs of the county, and providing my son with a complimentary commission in the Royal Western Militia.

These are privileges which Mrs. Kenrick would not rashly relinquish, and it has occurred to me that the publication of my autobiography may not tend to the maintenance of that dignity which inaugurated the appearance of the Kenricks at Hallow. I have always been anxious to show the utmost consideration for my wife's prejudices. Not that I am by any means henpecked. Mrs. Kenrick

has too much respect for herself to lower the manliness of her husband. I am my own master, and the head of my own household; but there are many little incidents in a man's life, which, as a rule, he would not voluntarily narrate to the wife of his bosom. This latter thought has perplexed me far more than my fears about prejudicing the family position; but I have concluded a *bonâ fide* contract with myself to finish my career with this one book, that shall set forth a true and particular account of my life and adventures, irrespective of all considerations anent family pride or matrimonial jealousy.

Thus much by way of personal introduction. "My intents are fixed, and will not leave me." Ladies and gentlemen, I am your humble, obedient servant, and that which follows is your humble, obedient servant's history.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I AM MISERABLE, AND IN WHICH I RUN AWAY FROM HOME.

DID you ever run away from home?

It is a bold thing to do; but a bolder never to return again,—to stay away forever and ever, and fight your own battle in the great, wide world.

Whilst I write I see a little midland town in a misty autumn morning. The first bell of the day is being rung in the old church tower. Factory men and women are trudging off to work, and the shutters of industrious tradesmen are being taken down by gaping apprentices.

I see a young fellow—a boy, indeed, with big, staring eyes, and dark-brown hair—open the door of a respectable old-fashioned looking house and step upon the pavement. He is a well-dressed and comely youth—a resolute, handsome lad, one of those determined, hot-headed fellows, with whom it is a word and a blow. If you had been at school with that boy, you would not have called him a coward, nor any other objectionable name, without being quite prepared to defend yourself. He was one of those youths who cannot brook control, unless it might be the control of a kind-hearted, tender mother, or the control of a true and discreet friend.

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quaint-looking booksellers' shops and printing offices which were to be seen in most country towns thirty years ago. Two bow-windows, with a door in the centre: two bow-windows full of books, stationery, bibles and primers, sealing-wax and wafers, pens and pencils, engravings and illustrated note-headings, patent medicines, and postage stamps. A very quaint old shop, forsooth, with "Robinson Crusoe," "The Whole Duty of Man," "Gulliver's Travels," "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy," "The Works of William Shakspeare," "Heathen Mythology," on one set of dusty book-shelves; and "Jack the Giant Killer," "Blue Beard," "The Speaker," and "Fairy Tales," on another; with a miscellaneous collection of "Songs and Ballads," in a particular corner for miscellaneous hawkers and others, who bought them to sell at fairs and races. All these things I devoured; my education was the education afforded chiefly by that miscellaneous shop. And when I could set up types, when my little fingers had been sufficiently trained after school-hours, and on those many days when I never went to school at all, I hunted up strange border ballads to practise upon. My father said this had turned my head: he had often punched my head in order to knock it straight again, I presume; but no punishment could drive out of my brain the glorious stories of those old books, or the ringing metre of those sparkling heroic ballads.

At this present moment I can honestly take credit

to myself for introducing amongst the yards of songs which are sold at Midland fairs, some of the best ballad literature of the nation. My father used to say that I set up all the most stupid and sentimental songs that had ever been written; but I turn me now, in my declining years, to "Percy's Relics," and "The Ballad Book," refreshing my memories of those past days, and indorsing my boyish judgment with the approval of experience.

Why should I tell you all this? Simply that you may understand something of the bias of my youthful mind. Our education does not simply consist in what we learn at school. My education was obtained in that old shop, and in that old printing office, where all the work was done on one wooden press, by two or three wooden men, who laughed and jeered at that bright-eyed wilful boy, who stood upon a stool and set up border ballads.

Nobody understood me in that hard, God-forsaken Stoneyfield—schoolmasters, tutors, boys, girls, parents. They all depreciated that little fellow who would have his own way. Perhaps he deserved their scorn; perhaps he did not. Had they once tested the tenderness of his heart, they might have treated him differently; but they only tried his courage, his firmness, his self-love: and these were in a chronic state of excitement in consequence, until one misty autumn morning, when the little Stoneyfield *printer fell* on his knees and bade the cruel *town good-bye* forever.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND.

I FELT none of the despondency and depression which usually attends the exile.

With that first pang of grief in the railway train, my heart had relieved itself of all that latent affection for Stoneyfield which comes with early associations, even though they be painful.

If I knew none of the people whom I met in this strange city of Lindford, they offered me no indignity. The big boys did not square up at me and expect me to fight, as they did at Stoneyfield, and as I sometimes did to their cost; the little ones did not sneer and call me names when they were far enough off to be out of harm's way. I was a man here on my own responsibility, new to the people, they new to me.

My heart leaped at the prospect before me. Here I would begin the great fight. Under the shadow of that grand cathedral would I plant my standard, and commence those preliminary contests which come before the great shock of the conflict.

I carried my little bag and leisurely reconnoitred the city. I found it a long straggling street of quiet-looking shops and substantial residences, with little *thoroughfares* branching off here and there, and a

deep calm river dividing it in two—a deep calm river with lazy barges upon its placid bosom, lazy barges wending their way, with big brown sails, like exaggerated bats'-wings, to the broad ocean that waited for them beyond the great wide plain.

Close by the town bridge over the river there was a handsome bookseller's shop,—handsome to me who had known no better establishment than that emporium of curiosities at Stoneyfield. Two plate-glass windows enclosed showy specimens of an attractive stock of books and pictures; and in gold letters on the glass was printed—"Offices of the *Lindford Herald.*"

I lingered about this establishment for some time, peeped in at the open doorway, and I can remember now the pleasant smell of Russia and Morocco-bound prayer-books and bibles that were being exhibited at the moment to a fastidious customer. It was a large, well-stocked shop, with neat glass-cases behind the counters; and on one side a little office—cut off, no doubt, for the principal; and on a brass plate fastened to the door-post once more I observed the magic words, "*Lindford Herald.*"

With the perfume of the handsome bindings, and all that power of glass and books in my mind, I sought out a respectable inn, and ordered a frugal dinner.

Whilst the waiter was laying the cloth, I washed, changed my collar and necktie, and made myself as *presentable as my small* wardrobe would allow.

Seeing a stalwart fellow setting out the table and bringing in meat and potatoes and beer specially for me, helped to foster those manly sensations which I had felt when I stepped upon the Lindford platform.

Nevertheless, it was with considerable nervousness that I entered Mr. Mitching's handsome shop, an hour afterward, and offered him my services.

The proprietor of the *Lindford Herald* and that fine glassy shop put up his eyeglass to look at me, and patronizingly asked me what I could do.

I see him now—a stout, pompous, elderly gentleman, with bushy gray whiskers, a florid complexion, and a large quantity of black silk watchguard, which gave him a still more fussy and grandiloquent aspect. His gold-rimmed eyeglasses enhanced his dignity in my estimation. He had a magnificent way of balancing them on his nose, and looking over the glasses and under them, as he pleased, by way of variation to the monotony of their own intrinsic magnifying power.

"Well, sir, you are a strange young gentleman, certainly. I think the best thing I can do is to hand you over to the police until your friends are informed of your whereabouts, sir."

I was particularly struck with the dignity of being addressed as Sir. At home nobody called me anything but Christopher, and we should not there have thought of addressing any one less than a magistrate as Sir. For a moment it occurred to me that Mr. *Mitching was sneering* at me, and then a little of

the cowed feeling of Stoneyfield exercised a depressing influence upon me, and I did not make the spirited reply to Mr. Mitching which had been in my mind a few moments previously.

It was lucky for me that I did not, for Mr. Mitching, taking me kindly by the hand, led me into a snug parlor at the back of the office, and there introduced me to his wife.

"Master Christopher Kenrick, my dear," said the proprietor of the *Lindford Herald*—"who has run away from home, because he is not properly appreciated."

This was an adaptation of a portion of the story which I had related to Mr. Mitching. "Properly appreciated" seemed to tickle him immensely.

"Not properly appreciated," he continued, laughing and elevating his glasses at me once more; "in consequence of which melancholy circumstance he has left home, intending to fight his own way in the world independently of parental aid or control. With a view of commencing his career under the most favorable circumstances, he offers his services to me, and is prepared to commence work to-morrow."

"Pray sit down, Mr. Kenrick," said the lady, in a pleasant, musical voice. "How old are you?"

"Nearly seventeen, madam," I replied.

"Can you write a leader now for the *Herald*, do you think?" said Mr. Mitching, nodding quietly at his wife to intimate that they would have some fun presently.

"I fear not, sir," I replied modestly.

"You think it would not be properly appreciated, eh? Ah! ah! ah! Upon my word you are a funny fellow."

"Don't laugh at him, George," said Mrs. Mitching, who observed my lip quiver slightly. "I am sure he is a brave, honest boy."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Mitching; "and I'll tell you what it is, love—he shall come and give us the benefit of his experience in the art of printing and publishing, to-morrow. What do you say, Master Kenrick—will you come for a week on trial, and see if *we* can properly appreciate you?"

As he said this, the old gentleman patted me kindly on the head, and looked for a smile of approval from his wife, who rewarded him promptly.

She was a pretty little woman, this Mrs. Mitching, and at least twenty years younger than her husband. I shall never forget her bright, gray eyes, her white teeth, her genial smile, and her supple figure. How that big, pompous old gentleman had induced her to marry him was a mystery which I used sometimes to think about in after years, when I had nearly fallen in love with her myself.

With the aid of Mr. Mitching's shopman, I found out a comfortable lodging, and that night I slept for the first time in my own rooms.

CHAPTER III.

I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FOURTH ESTATE, AND FALL IN LOVE.

HAPPY days, those early days of youthful hope and ambition! Happy, despite occasional pangs of remorse.

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land." How these words hit me down in my loneliness I will not weary the reader by explaining.

I was comforted, however, by an inward consciousness of a desire to honor my father and my mother. There are duties of parents and duties of children. Had I done mine? I did not care to question my father's position; but I earnestly inquired into my own, and my conscience upheld me, more particularly after I had written a filial letter home, in which I claimed to take my own course, and yet expressed a sonly regard for my father and a dutiful affection for my mother.

Yet when I heard of other young fellows going down home to shoot or fish, or to spend a day or two, I felt my exile acutely; for my father did not write to me, and my mother only sent me one or two cold, formal letters.

Seeing that it was alleged against me that I had caused my parents nothing but trouble and anxiety, it might be that they were glad to be rid of their tiresome son. That my father loved me I knew full well, but he was a strange, proud, passionate man; and my mother was too reserved to exhibit her affection, though in early days I do remember me of one or two consoling hours with my head on her knee, upon those painful occasions when my father had fully vindicated his faith in the rod. But these instances of maternal affection were long and long before I had resolved to run away from home; and they had not been latterly repeated, lest I should be spoiled, perchance, notwithstanding an unsparing physical purgation of boyish faults.

I attended at Mr. Mitching's on that next morning, and found the magnificent proprietor of the *Lindford Herald* engaged in balancing his eyeglasses upon his well-developed nose. At the close of the day he looked over them and under them at me, stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, and complimented me upon my intelligence.

"I think you will be appréciated here, Mr. Kenrick; I think so, indeed; be industrious, be honest, be honorable, and you may fairly follow up that grand course of independence which you have chalked out for yourself, sir. Mrs. Mitching has a high opinion of you, and the greatest compliment

in the world which I can pay any one is to say that he holds a place in the good opinion of Mrs. Mitching; yes, sir, that he holds a place in her good opinion."

Mr. Mitching evidently liked the latter phrase. As an orator and proprietor of the *Lindford Herald* he had of course a right to make a speech at me, and he very frequently afterward indulged himself in this respect; so much so, that more than once in the days that followed I had almost mechanically taken out my note-book to record his auricular utterances.

On that first day, and many others, I had the felicity of laboring in my new quarters, with the approval of Mr. Mitching. My position in his famous offices was humble at first, but I worked my way upward with strong and certain strides.

In a few months I mastered a system of shorthand sufficiently well to write it, as Dickens' hero wrote it, and with all that gentleman's difficulties in the way of interpretation. Under the influence of a patient perseverance, fostered and kept awake by cold tea and wet towels, I produced my first report, commenced one evening at sunset and finished as the sun rose again, turning my poor candle into a weak and yellow flame.

I tackled those wretched hieroglyphics of Harding's with the firmness of a runaway slave who struggles on through pestilential marsh and jungle, for the sake of the liberty that is beyond.

Not twelve months had elapsed before I was promoted to the dignity of chief reporter of the *Lindford Herald;* and in those days that was as much of a triumph to me with my poor limited ambition as Benjamin Disraeli's elevation the other day was to him, in his more magnificent and extended destinies.

In a provincial city, such as Lindford, a gentleman holding my position was a gentleman of no mean importance. The county paper had a power that Londoners can hardly understand. An objectionable criticism of any public act connected with Lindford was of much greater weight in the county paper than it would have been in the *Times*. Everybody in the ancient city saw the old paper, and talked over its news on Saturday nights, and everybody was anxious to stand well with the reporter.

The actors who came to Lindford for the assizes, the races, or the Whitsuntide-holidays, hunted up the reporter of the *Lindford Herald*, and made that young gentleman very happy by giving him the *entrée* behind the scenes.

What a change there was in that melancholy youth who was running away in the first chapter of this narrative!

In less than a year I had budded into stick-up collars, and blossomed as a smart young gentleman in a tall hat and frock-coat. I smoked, too, and had a suit of flannels made for rowing and cricketing. There was a black streak of down on my upper lip,

and my voice was rough. I read up politics, and began to think that some day I might be an editor. This daring flight of ambition, however, I am bound to say was a secret in my own breast, until a certain soft-voiced young person elicited from my own lips an occasional outburst of ambitious hopes, amongst which was this one magnificent notion of future greatness.

I look back now upon that Lindford reporter, with his limited range of hope, as a sort of psychological study, and I envy him his quiet, unsophisticated pleasures. Can that young fellow whom I see strutting along the High Street of Lindford, with his note-book under his arm, in which there is a true and particular account of the last meeting of the Lindford Town Council, have been Christopher Kenrick? Happy youth! His two sovereigns a week were far sweeter to him than hundreds have been to the man who was once that boy!

For many months my chief companions were those imaginary beings of the books in my father's old shop at Stoneyfield. The works of William Shakspeare!—how they clung to my fancy, what solace, what delight they afforded me! And "The Speaker," with its many flowers, culled from the literary highway! Who shall ever tell all the pleasures of literature? or be sufficiently grateful for the works of William Shakspeare?

Do I *owe it to these* romantic books of unromantic *Stoneyfield that* my heart was so susceptible in

those early days? Should I ever have fallen in "love at first sight" had not my fancy and imagination been excited by poetry and romance? Or did Fate take me by the hand, on that summer evening long ago, and lead me down the High Street just as Esther Wilton and her sister were sauntering homeward in the twilight?

Esther Wilton! I see her now, a girl in her first long frock, a dark green lama frock, that clung to her lithe undulating figure, and set off all its fair proportions. She came upon me like a dream of beauty, with soft blue eyes and a round happy face. From her ample Leghorn hat there fell a cluster of brown silky curls, and she seemed to glide along like a Goddess of Evening. I write too enthusiastically, you think? I write as I felt in those early days of love, and hope, and ambition. By her side was her sister Emmy, a dark-brown, black-eyed, quick-tempered-looking girl, several years Esther's senior. I took her into my mind at that first glance, but she only seemed to act as a foil to her younger sister's rosy beauty.

I knew neither one nor the other then by name, but I watched them along the street, far away, until they were out of sight; and I went home with one sweet image in my memory forever and for aye. Home! how easily I write the word, I who may be said to have had no home in those days, I who had turned my back upon home, to stand alone in the *world*. *Home*, the poets say, must be associated

with those we love; home must be the dwelling-place of the heart. How could I call my humble lodging home?—two narrow little rooms in the house of a widow; and such a widow—a ranting woman, with a pin in her eye and all the colors of the rainbow in her cap. You could hear her all over the house when she slept, she pervaded every room when she awoke. She was essentially a noisy, loud woman, continually asserting herself, forever taking her stand on the character and reputation of Mr. Nixon, who had died abroad whilst preparing for his wife to join him in the colonies, whither he had gone to make their mutual fortunes,—induced to leave her, I should imagine, because of her self-assertion, rather than, as she explained, out of the great love he had for her, and his desire that she should be independent of the cares and troubles attendant upon her extensive business of fashionable milliner and mantle-maker.

And this was my home. I called it home, and felt a homely regard for it. My first lodgings I had recently deserted, and I had been in these new ones only a fortnight when I went home with those soft blue eyes of Esther Wilton in my heart.

I had one accomplishment of which I have not yet spoken. My father was a good musician, and he had taught me to play upon the violin. Recently I had been enabled to purchase an instrument of moderate quality, and I found it a source of great solace and pleasure in my new home. If your no-

tions of the violin are of the fair and races aspect, if you call the instrument a fiddle, and think of it in connection with a jig, you will laugh at my being in love with an unknown face, seen for the first time, and pouring my passion into a fiddle. Laugh, my friend, an it please you; life is a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous; but there was no mirth in those long, singing tones which came out of that violin. If you know the instrument, you know how it can talk; what sweet, tender things it will say to those who can interpret its language. With my soul in my hand, I believe I composed a musical idyl that night. I had a new power. A new ambition had taken possession of me. I was a new man. I seemed to desire a closer friendship with the world. Before I went to bed I sat down and wrote a dutiful and affectionate letter to my mother, whose forgiveness I implored, whose happiness I prayed for, and whose good offices with my father I humbly solicited.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO MISS JULIA BELMONT.

How quickly the time sped away!

I had labored hard to master the details of the profession into which Fate had launched me; and success was crowning my efforts when a new attraction presented itself.

At the Lindford theatre a company was performing for the summer season. I had won the good feeling of the whole dramatic corps by a wonderful series of eulogistic criticisms of their performances. I had more particularly taken under my journalistic protection Miss Julia Belmont, a young lady who played leading business, and captivated all the young gentlemen in Lindford.

Miss Belmont was not more than twenty. The manager informed me that there was some sad secret in her history, which gave her peculiar claims to consideration. She had only been on the stage two years; but she had made a successful *début* in London, and was now making a tour through the provinces for the sake of experience in stage business. She had a bright gray eye, which seemed to look into your very heart. Neither a blonde nor a brunette, she had that neutral kind of complexion

which makes up well on the stage. Her carriage was graceful, and she was refined and lady-like in her manner and address.

I am enabled to speak thus critically because I had done myself the pleasure of responding to her invitation, and had called upon her before she had been in Lindford a fortnight. I shall never forget her little room. It was small and littery. There was an old-fashioned square piano in one corner; a fluffy old sofa in another, with feathers bursting through the chintz; a wicker chair on one side the fireplace, and two rush-bottomed chairs on the other side. In the centre of the room there was a round table covered with green baize, upon which tea-things were generally displayed, mixed up with marked play-books, manuscript sheets of music, and stray play-bills. A few books were huddled together upon a table under the window, that looked upon a back-yard where clothes were generally hanging out to dry. The mantel-shelf was adorned with sundry dilapidated yet showy ornaments belonging to the house, and a scent-bottle and some other trifles of the kind belonging to the heroine of the dramatic muse at Lindford.

Amid these lodging-house gods sat Miss Julia Belmont, in a muslin dress, pink slippers, and curl-papers. She looked charming in my eyes at all times—more so, perhaps, *en déshabille*, than in theatrical robes and theatrical paint.

"And you have left parents and home, as I have

done?" she said to me one morning after rehearsal, when I called on my way from a magisterial meeting, the prosy details of which were stowed away in my pocket, mysteriously disguised for the present in shorthand.

"Yes," I said; "but I am better able to fight the world alone than you are, Miss Belmont."

"Indeed!" she said, rolling her gray eyes upon me, and looking at me as if she were peering up out of a deep reverie.

"I do not mean so far as ability goes, Miss Belmont. I trust I should not be so absurd as that."

"You are a flatterer," said the actress, smiling in a vague, musing way.

"No, I assure you," I replied, with alacrity. "I never saw a lady who realizes so well my idea of a great actress."

"For one so young you pay compliments very proficiently. How many ladies have you seen play the parts which I play?"

"One other," I said.

"Only one; and where, pray?"

"At the Summer Fair in Stoneyfield Market-place."

"You are facetious," said Miss Belmont, looking just a little piqued.

"No, indeed, I am not. She played *Desdemona* one night, *Lady Macbeth* another, and last of all I saw her as *Maria Martin*."

"And you think I excel her?"

"Immeasurably," I said.

"Thank you, Mr. Kenrick," she said. "You amuse me. You may wait for me at the stage-door to-night, and bring me home."

"I shall be delighted," I replied; and I left her to perch myself on a wooden stool and write out all the wisdom uttered by the Lindford county magistrates in petty sessions that morning assembled.

Gentle reader, be kind and considerate to reporters—never write to the papers and complain that they have not correctly reported you. Give them the best seats at your public dinners, the best places at your public meetings. Remember them in your prayers; and if you are rich, startle some poor member of the profession when you die by mentioning him for a legacy in your will. They are a hard-working, ill-appreciated race. How often do you go home from a great meeting, wearied and sick with the speaking to which you have been compelled to listen! Just think that the reporters have not only been compelled to listen, they have had to follow all the talk with their pencils; and whilst you are comfortably asleep in bed, they are painfully transcribing their notes for the printer.

Of all the heart-breaking sights, an untranscribed note-book, full to the last leaf, is "the most heart-breakingest;" but coupled therewith is the joy with which the reporter runs his pen through the last sentence and performs that final flourish which concludes nearly every shorthand writer's "copy."

It was not Miss Julia Belmont's face that seemed to look up at me every now and then from the depths of my note-book, but that of the blue eyes and silky curls; and at night in the theatre I found myself thinking of this same face, even during Miss Belmont's performance of *Rosalind*.

"Do you think the lady at the fair could have played *Rosalind* as well as Miss Belmont?" said that young lady, as I walked home with her at the close of the performance.

"Oh, no," I replied.

"Have you read much of Shakspeare?"

"I almost know him by heart."

"Which are your favorite heroines?"

"Miranda, Rosalind, Portia, and Constance."

"Your judgment is not bad, Mr. Kenrick. How old are you?"

Miss Belmont seemed to be regularly taking me under her charge.

"Eighteen," I said.

"Three years younger than I," she replied, as if she were making a mental memorandum of the difference between our ages.

"I wish I was three years older," I said.

"Why?" asked Miss Belmont, promptly.

"I don't know why. I should like to be a man."

"So you are a man—much more of a man than many who are ten years your senior."

"Do you think so?" I asked, looking round at her curiously, as we passed under a gas-lamp.

"I do," she said in reply, laughing and pressing my arm with a gentle pressure. "Why, here we are at home, I declare! How quickly we must have walked!"

I was about to say "Good-night" here, but a savory smell of hot supper, and a hospitable invitation to partake thereof, were sufficiently attractive to make me a willing guest of Miss Belmont's. There were fellows in Lindford who would have given their ears to have such a *tête-à-tête* as I had upon this occasion with the fair young actress.

The supper consisted of a rich stew of some kind, with fried potatoes and bottled stout. After this Miss Belmont mixed for herself a little grog in a wine-glass, and for me a larger modicum in a tumbler.

"Do you like music?" Miss Belmont inquired.

"Very much indeed," I said.

"I must play softly, or we shall disturb the household," said the actress, taking her seat at a six-octave square. "What do you like?"

"Anything that you like I am sure will please me," I said.

"One of Mendelssohn's 'Songs Without Words'?" she suggested.

"Next to a real song with words," I said.

"Oh, I rarely sing," said Miss Belmont, commencing one of Mendelssohn's sublime compositions.

The performer played a few bars very well, and

then she got into an inextricable confusion, which made her angry.

"I always stick here," she said, impatiently.

"You make a slight mistake in the crotchet-rest there," I said, pointing out her difficulty. "The right-hand chord comes in before that half bar—"

"You are a musician, I see," said Miss Belmont, leaving her seat. "You play."

"Not the piano; at least, only a little."

"Oh, yes, you do; play me that difficult passage."

I did so, though I bungled at it slightly.

"Upon my honor, you are an accomplished young gentleman," said Miss Belmont, half in earnest, half sarcastically, I thought.

"I wish I were," I replied, quietly. "I play the violin a little."

"You do! then you shall bring your violin up and we will practise together."

"I will," I said, nothing loth. "But pray finish your piece."

"No; I will sing you just one song, and then you must go home."

It was a sweet and tender strain, and the singer seemed to feel its burden of love and sorrow.

"There, sir," she said, when it was over, "now you must go home, or you will have a bad character."

"I am sure I thank you very much for letting me stay so long," I said, taking up my hat, and preparing to obey the lady's orders.

"You may kiss my hand," she said, when I had taken it to say good-night.

I kissed her hand accordingly, and I was ungrateful enough to think all the way home how much I should like to kiss the hand of that pretty girl in the lama frock.

CHAPTER V.

FAMILY CRITICISM—A CHAPTER BY THE WAY.

It would have been more conducive to my own comfort, and probably more satisfactory to the reader, had I published no part of this story until it had become a finished and complete performance.

My neglect in this respect has, since the first portion of the narrative appeared, subjected me to a running fire of family criticism, objections, and remonstrances. This is not all; it has resulted in the introduction of a new feature here which I certainly never contemplated at the outset—a new feature which may or may not please the reader.

The Gentleman's Magazine, containing my opening chapters, has not been in the house a day before Mrs. Kenrick favors me with her confidential opinion upon the work.

"It will not only be a failure, Christopher," she says; "it will do the family irreparable injury."

"Why will it be a failure?" I inquire.

"Because it is too true, my dear," she says.

"And why will it injure the family?" I ask.

"Because it is too true," my wife replies again.

"Its truthfulness will be its greatest charm with *the public," I reply.* "Readers quite jog with An-

tony's exclamation—'who tells me true, though in his tale lie death, I hear him as he flatter'd.'"

"I do not care about Antony or the public," my wife rejoins, with more than ordinary emphasis. "When I have urged you to tell the story of your life, I never for one moment thought you would describe it so closely."

"Have you any other objection?" I ask, quietly.

"I shall simply be confined to the house forever, if you continue to write this last book on the plan with which you have set out; I shall be ashamed to visit any one."

My wife evidently does not know what else to say; so she bounces off to her room, and leaves me to digest her opinion. There is wisdom, perhaps, in her objections; I might have colored the early chapters a little; the rest can take care of themselves.

After our evening cup of coffee on that same day, I can see that I am in for a general family criticism.

My eldest son is the first to open fire. He is just finishing his education for the army; he has a commission in the militia, and that gallant force will be up for training in the county town next week.

"Excuse me, governor," says my eldest son; "but I wish you had not considered it necessary to go into all those details of your youth in that professed autobiography which you have commenced."

"Indeed!" I reply, willing to hear all that my family can advance upon the subject.

"I shall be chaffed at mess next week, I know."

"Indeed!" I say, quietly.

"I shall be asked if I ever ran away from home."

"You can say 'No, you were never miserable,'" I rejoin, without the slightest emotion.

"Yes; but, governor, is it really necessary to go into all those details?"

I sip my coffee and smile. My youngest daughter (she is engaged to our promising curate, who will one day be vicar of Hallow) looks up into my face, and says she has been asked over and over again, which young lady papa really married, the one with the blue eyes, or the actress.

"Pleasant, truly," says Mrs. Kenrick, "to have one's daughter questioned in this fashion. I wish you had told the story differently, Christopher. If you persist in continuing it, do, pray, disguise the facts in some way."

"Shall you relate that scandal about Mrs. Mitching?" continues my youngest girl; "that affair which you were describing to mamma the other night?"

Before I can answer this last inquiry, my military son looks coaxingly at me, and says, "I wish the governor would drop the story altogether, and say the opening of it was simply done in fun."

"My dear children," I reply, "there is nothing to be ashamed of in this narrative. Our greatest men have made their own way, as I have done."

"But they don't tell everybody all about their antecedents," says my son.

"There you are in error, my boy. Men who have risen above all other men like to talk of what they were. My old friend, George Stephenson, delighted to chat about his early struggles; and so, I believe, did Telford, though I never met him."

"The Kenricks being of such a good family, as we know they are, how did they come down to be printers?" asks my youngest daughter.

"Come down, Cissy!" I exclaim, warmly. "Come down! The press is the brightest gem in our escutcheon, my dear, as it is in that of the noble house of Stanhope."

"There! you have done it," says my wife to Cissy. "If your father has one particular hobby-horse which he is never tired of mounting, it is the press."

"Come down!" I repeat, despite this side attack of Mrs. Kenrick's. "Printing has conferred the greatest of all earthly blessings upon poor humanity. Printers were men of special consideration not many years ago, and wore swords. Indeed, they may wear swords now; the act bestowing upon them that privilege is still unrepealed."

"You are quoting yourself, Christopher—quoting from your 'Essay on Printing,' which appeared in 'Bint's Encyclopædia,'" says my wife.

I decline to be pulled up in this way.

"The story of printing would be a history of the world's civilization; and the history of famous

printers would contain a list of the greatest men of this and every other age. To say nothing of Franklin, don't you remember that the author you most admire, Douglas Jerrold, was a printer?"

I light a cheroot and walk to the balcony, which looks out upon a smooth, well-cut lawn, adorned with croquet hoops; and I commend my own taste, though it be a painter's trick, in having the pegs tipped with vermilion.

"Your father is as enthusiastic about printing as Mr. Caxton in Bulwer's novel," says my wife, who follows me, and links her arm in mine. She has no silly, pretentious objections to a mild cigar. In fact, we often dine in "motley" at Hallow Hall, and smoke cigars and cigarettes afterward, notwithstanding county prejudices.

"I don't believe any one thinks the story is really true," chimes in my eldest daughter, Bess, who is a particularly thoughtful lady, an admirer of Miss Martineau, and a worshipper of Miss Burdett Coutts and Florence Nightingale.

I had been anxious to hear the opinion of my eldest daughter, and I listen attentively as she proceeds.

"It is an author's license to say his tale is true, and his best security for interested readers that he takes his inspiration from real life. Whether this one be father's real experience or not, the story is immensely entertaining."

"Thank *you, Bess,*" I reply, still smoking.

"May I offer a suggestion?" she continues.

"Certainly."

"Devote a chapter now and then to our conversations about the story."

"A good idea," I reply; "but, like nearly all good ideas, it is not a new one, I fear. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, who has already been mentioned, would tell you, I think, that the Caxtons talked in 'My Novel.'"

"An outline of our conversations would be in a different spirit altogether," says Bess. "We don't talk like the Caxtons."

"I wish we did," I rejoin.

"Do you, father? Do you, really? I think they are a stilted lot, and not half so original as the Kenricks would be."

"Vanity, my love, vanity," I reply.

"At all events, if your story really be autobiographical, as you say it is, the chat of the hero and heroine upon the narrated incidents of their own lives would surely be an entirely new idea, and could not fail to be interesting. What do you say, mother?"

"I quite agree with you, love; and there will be this advantage in it," replies Mrs. Kenrick, "the heroine can correct any points to which she may take exception. There is no knowing what your father may write, in his present mood."

"I demur to your corrections," I reply.

"Then pray check your pen a little, Christopher," says my wife, appealingly.

"My pen is something like my old cob," I say, in response. "It will sometimes take its own course, in spite of its owner; and I often find, when the journey is over, that I have acted wisely in giving the pair of them a loose rein."

How far I have done well in trusting my pen to carry me safely and creditably through this somewhat extraneous chapter is for the reader to say.

I pull the scampering quill up, after its long unchecked gallop, and collect my thoughts to regain the old highway in which we are to follow the vagaries of that romantic Stoneyfield printer, whose history crops up in my mind like a half-remembered dream, as if I really were *not* Christopher Kenrick at all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF MY LIFE PROGRESSES.

Having sat up the remainder of the night on which I supped with Miss Belmont to finish my report of the magisterial proceedings before mentioned, I was fully entitled to the leisure which I proposed for myself on the morrow.

I marvel at the physical power that I possessed in those early days. To sit up half the night, and get up, bright and frisk, early the next morning, was a common thing. Sometimes I did not go to bed at all. In the height of that shorthand agony, when I was getting into my mind Mr. Harding's strange characters, I have sat up for several nights in a week. It is true, I often looked pale and ill; but a little additional rest soon put me right again, and I went on learning my newspaper lesson and working out my destiny.

After rehearsal on this next day, I dived up that smudgy passage beyond which Miss Belmont lodged, and asked her if she would like to see some of the lions of Lindford.

The lady was most gracious. She thanked me for this mark of attention, and said she would accompany me with pleasure. I see her now in a light

muslin dress (a little dingy in appearance), a Galway cloak, and a bonnet trimmed with blue. I see her companion in a suit of loose gray clothes, with a cane under his arm, a black hat just a trifle on one side of his head, and a certain amount of swagger in his gait. They are an odd-looking couple. I do not wonder that people look twice at them as they pass along the High Street. I remember to have heard over and over again the remarks of one citizen to another, in an undertone, "That's Miss Belmont," and once I distinctly noted a voice saying, "And that's Mr. Kenrick."

Here was fame indeed! I am free to confess that this public recognition was sweet to me then, whether my momentary fame arose from my position on the press, or from the fact that I was walking with Miss Julia Belmont, from the Theatres Royal Drury Lane and Haymarket.

How the old street comes up in my memory, with its lines of quiet shops intermingled with quieter private houses! On the left by the bridge is the ancient conduit. Further on we pass beneath the Roman arch. Then we climb up the long steep hill which is crowned by the cathedral and castle.

There is a social legend to this day amongst the inhabitants of the hill, that they are the aristocracy of Lindford. This is not believed in by the people below; but the hillites frequently give their neighbors of the *plain startling* illustrations of their own *faith. An uphill lady* will not meet a lady from

regions of the bridge. An uphill professional looks down, in more senses than one, upon the professionals below. An uphill tradesman sneers at a below-the-hill one. An uphill washerwoman would not demean herself by scouring the linen of a person who resided downhill.

These distinctions of Lindford society created a perpetual feud between Uphill and Downhill, and there was no chance of settling the differences of the two sections of the community, for the reason that the uphill division was being continually strengthened by a desertion from below. The deserter usually turned out to be the fiercest asserter of the truth of the aristocratic legend of uphill caste.

I explained this Gulliverian kind of difficulty in the social relations of Lindford to Miss Belmont, who was particularly amused at my recital.

"It is lucky for the theatre that the house is built between uphill and downhill," she said.

"Luckier that it is more uphill than down," I said, "or Lindford would never have seen Miss Belmont. Two yards further downhill, and the theatre would have been given up to strollers and vagabonds. Uphill would not have supported it, and Downhill could not have afforded the luxury all to itself."

"Do you like living in such a place as this, Mr. Kenrick? Would you not rather be in London?"

"I like Lindford," I said, "and I never was in

London but once. Stay, I have been in London twice; once when I passed through it by coach on my way to Stoneyfield. I was only four months old, however, then, and could not be said to have taken much notice of what I saw. A second time I was in London when I was fourteen, and my memory is confused concerning the great Babylon's appearance on that occasion. My father took me by the first 'cheap train' which had ever started from Stoneyfield, and I remember that he beat me on the return journey, because I nearly fell through the window of the carriage in my anxiety to see some boats on a river which we were passing."

"You are a strange boy, Mr. Kenrick," said the actress.

She evidently regarded me as a sort of human curiosity. I felt flattered that I had made so much impression upon a lady of such distinguished merit.

I showed Miss Belmont the exterior of the castle, pointed out to her the tower where criminals underwent their sentence of death, and then we strolled through the cathedral.

The legend of the two painted windows in the transept was unknown to her.

"That window," I said, pointing to the one on my right, "was the work of the master, and this," pointing to that on my left, "was the work of his apprentice. Both windows were uncovered in one day, years and years ago. Each artist stood on the *parapet there, near his* own work. The master's

was uncovered first, and then the man's was uncovered. The man's was by far the finest window of the two. So great was the master's chagrin, that he threw himself to the ground; and that mark by your foot is a blood stain."

As I concluded, Miss Belmont quite started at the idea of standing by the poor fellow's blood. She had taken in the whole story with the utmost reliance upon its truth.

"I did not think you were so sensitive," I said.

"You told the story with such earnestness, and made your point so dramatically, that I could feel the blood on my foot. You would make an actor, sir," replied Miss Belmont, looking at me without the least cynical expression.

"Of course the story is only legendary," I said.

"It is much more like truth than that wretched feud of Uphill and Downhill, which is as bad as the Lilliputian quarrel about the eggs, or that stupid business in the 'Corsican Brothers.'"

"Over the college yard, and down yon slope," I said, when we were once more outside the cathedral, "are the ruins of a monkish chapel. Would you like to walk as far?"

"I am quite in your hands," said Miss Belmont, pleasantly. "You have afforded me so much pleasure, that I leave the conclusion of our walk to your own selection. I have only to beg that you give me time to get to the theatre by half-past six."

So we rambled to the monk's chapel, and there

we sat down beneath the trees, and saw the lazy barges, with the big brown bat's-wing sails, going down the quiet, still river.

"This is delicious," said Miss Belmont. "How I envy girls who live by quiet places like these, girls who play their parts in a real world, with real abbeys and real trees and real water! It is a weary life that of an actress."

"Are you in earnest?" I said.

"I was never more so. You see the stage from the front; you know nothing of the miserable heart-burnings behind. It is true I am not much annoyed now; I have certain business to do, and I do it; but at first, oh, it was a weary, wretched life."

"I should have thought it the happiest life of all. The whole world seems to envy you."

"The whole world looks down upon us. Why even the ladies of Downhill would hardly deign to receive Julia Belmont as their visitor; and the Uphill women would not think me entitled to a seat in the servants' hall," said Miss Belmont bitterly.

"Surely this cannot be true?"

"It is true," said Miss Belmont; and at that moment I startled her with an exclamation of joy and surprise.

Beneath the trees and round by the back of the old chapel, with a little basket in her hand full of wild-flowers, and an infant jumping on in front, passed that pretty *girl in the lama* frock.

"What is the matter?" Miss Belmont asked.

"Oh, is not that a pretty girl?" I exclaimed.

"Rather pretty," said the actress; "but what of her? Did you never see a pretty girl before?"

"Only once, and then it was this same young lady."

Miss Belmont must have known this was not said out of any disrespect to her, or with a view to depreciate her charms; but she changed the subject somewhat coldly, and by and by suggested that it was time to return home.

That night Miss Belmont played better than I had ever seen her play before. The piece was Lytton Bulwer's new play of "The Lady of Lyons," which had only recently been done at Covent Garden with Macready as Melnotte, and Miss Helen Faucit as Pauline. All Lindford was at the theatre, not only to see the new play, but to see the piece which Bulwer had written, because the author represented the free and independent electors of Lindford in the Commons House of Parliament.

Uphill and Downhill mustered in force, I say, at the Lindford theatre. The orchestra had been strengthened for the occasion, and special programmes printed for the dress-circle. Right opposite to my seat sat the young lady with blue eyes and brown curls, accompanied by the darker beauty, her sister, a lolloping-looking countryman, and a chubby-faced lady, who seemed to be a woman in some authority over the others; for she sat in the best seat, and cowed the blue eyes now and then *with an angry* remark.

From the stage to the seat opposite, my eyes wandered all the night. The young lady in white muslin (she had changed her lama frock) caught me gazing admiringly at her more than once, and without seeming displeased; but her more discreet sister of the dark hair palpably nudged her once when she seemed, I thought, about to convey as much in a pleasant smile.

And all the time Julia Belmont played Pauline with a grace and vigor which I have rarely seen excelled. She looked the part to perfection. When she confided the whole secret of her love to the cloaked figure, when she said she would rather share Melnotte's lowest lot than wear the crown the Bourbon lost, the house almost sobbed with sympathy. Uphill and Downhill were surprised into a sudden exhibition of real feeling, and, for my own part, I could not see the lady in the curls for tears.

How Julia Belmont must have hated me if she could have known that in these latter scenes I fancied myself Melnotte, and allotted the part of Pauline to that unknown girl with the blue eyes and the soft sweet smile!

CHAPTER VII.

THE BELLE OF BROMFIELD ROAD.

How it came about that at this early period of my life I might have offered my hand to, and been accepted by, three different marriageable young ladies, is a mystery to me even now. In these fashionable days a person of my humble position might sigh in vain for the smallest recognition from ladies even of the modest rank of the trio which honored me with such complimentary recognition. All classes of socicty have changed very considerably in thirty years.

It is quite certain that I must have been a very manly youth, unless the explanation is to be found in the fact that one young lady, who was evidently desirous to win my good opinion, paid similar court to every other gentleman; the other, Miss Belmont, was attracted by my somewhat unsophisticated manners; and the third was simply my Fate, as novelists say, and there an end.

It seemed to me as if I were destined to know all the beauties of Lindford, before I made the acquaintance of that fair apparition in the lama frock, who

was to make all other attractions pale their ineffectual fires.

Miss Amelia Birt was a celebrated young lady in Lindford when I was matriculating in the journalistic school of that midland district of England, and I was surprised to discover in this *belle* of Bromfield Road, the sister-in-law of an old friend of the Kenricks.

My introduction to her came about in this wise:—

One morning, when I was poring over that everlasting note-book in the reporter's room of the *Lindford Herald*, there entered to me Mr. Richard Fitzwalton, whom I had known at Stoneyfield.

"How do you do, young Kenrick?" he said, in his gushing way; "how do you do, young Kenrick?"

"Very well, thank you," I said; "how do you do?"

"Capital," said Mr. Fitzwalton; "why, how long have you been here?"

"Ever so long," I said.

"I saw your father last week, and promised to call and see how you were getting on."

"Oh!" I said, brightening up. "And how was my father, sir?"

"Very well, indeed."

"Did he say much about me?"

"Said you'd run away, and all that sort of thing."

"No more? Is he coming to see me?"

"Yes; I think he said he should come to see you."

"And my mother, sir?"

"Very unwell, indeed; very unwell."

"Did they seem hurt at my staying away?" I said. "Did they say they missed me much?"

"No, not they: you were a great source of annoyance to them, weren't you, young Kenrick, eh?"

I did not answer this last question. It cut me to the quick to feel that I was not missed, that I was not lamented. Moreover, I thought there was a patronizing style in Mr. Fitzwalton's address which was displeasing to me. I had mistaken my visitor in that respect. He was a good fellow, and a most hospitable, kindly gentleman.

At Stoneyfield, the Fitzwaltons were aristocrats. Old Fitzwalton was a magistrate, lived in a great brick house, kept horses, and had all beggars imprisoned. His son Richard was a manufacturer on a large scale, but was unsuccessful. When the works closed, and the bankers returned Richard's checks, his father had to pay the insolvent's debts. After that, Mr. Richard ran away with a nurseryman's daughter, married her, and took an appointment as chief draughtsman in the great iron-works at Lindford, where he had resided some six months when he called upon me.

Richard Fitzwalton was decidedly handsome. About thirty years of age, he was a well-built, athletic-looking fellow, with light-brown hair and sanguine blue eyes. His costume always seemed made to match his complexion and manner. Everything he wore was loose and flowing. His collars were low and ample, his neckerchief always tied in a

sailor's knot, his trousers fastened round the waist with a belt. He never wore gloves, and he looked more like a yachtsman just come home from a pleasant voyage, than a draughtsman who had been sitting over a drawing-board at the Lindford ironworks.

"Will you come and see us, Master Runaway?" he said, on this morning when he called upon me.

"I shall be very happy."

"Burton Villa, Bromfield Road," he said. "We dine in the middle of the day. Will you come and have tea at six to-night?"

"Thank you, I will."

"Put on your flannels, and we'll have a pull afterward."

"All right," I said, Fitzwalton's geniality beginning to tell upon me.

In the evening I presented myself at Burton Villa, which was prettily situated upon the slope of Bromfield Road, conveniently overlooking the county jail, where the melancholy wheel of the treadmill was continually going round. Beyond this there were a few trees and a bit of distant hill.

I entered a small green gate, and found myself in a small walled garden, then under a small porch, and in two minutes afterward in a small hall, where I was received by a small lady—a piquant, bright little woman, with dark eyes and hair.

"*Mr. Kenrick, I suppose?*" said the lady.

"Yes," I said, making my best bow.

"Very glad to see you. Come in. Richard will be here presently. My sister, Miss Amelia Birt, Mr. Kenrick."

Amelia was a young lady of most fair and fat proportions. She was dressed in the height of the fashion of those days, and wore an exceedingly low dress. She came forward, and offered me a fat, rosy little hand, and thereupon began to make love to me at once. Having fixed me with an endearing glance, she retired to her seat, and showed me a white, round arm, that was certainly pleasant to look upon.

I imagine Miss Amelia was about the age of Julia Belmont, but she would have made two of that young lady in width, though she was considerably shorter in height. She wore her hair tightly bound to her head. Her eyes rested upon you with languid, endearing glances. When she laughed she did so with a pretty little affectation, which she had acquired in an effort to hide a slight touch of decay in one of her front teeth.

I could not but feel flattered to receive such marked attention as that with which Miss Amelia favored me; but my conceit suffered a rude overthrow in days that followed, when I found that Miss Amelia made love to everybody. If she had no visitors on the spot to captivate and enthral with her languishing eyes, she sat at the window and pierced the hearts of passers-by. One conquest

was nothing to her. She went in for a whole host of suitors. She had no respect for persons.

When Richard Fitzwalton came, Amelia gave him a loud, bouncing kiss on the cheek before her sister, his wife, had time to speak; whereupon that gentleman said—

"Get on your linen togs after tea, we are going for a pull; Christopher Kenrick can row."

"I'm glad of that," said Mrs. Fitzwalton, in her brisk, bright way. "Let us have tea at once."

We had tea at once; a substantial, north-midland tea: a nice little steak, some cold ham, hot muffins, and a dish of strawberries afterward. I sat near Miss Amelia. We talked together as if we had known each other for many years. I had been acquainted with her brother-in-law at Stoneyfield, but only through his father, who had taken a great deal of notice of me in that little bookseller's shop. He had once invited me to go home with him and have a ride on one of his horses, which I had done to his cost and my own, breaking the horse's knees, and narrowly escaping myself with a whole neck.

After tea Miss Amelia came out in a dress and jacket of white linen, trimmed with blue. She took my arm with a charming familiarity that made me feel quite fast and manly. The people looked at us almost as much as they had looked at Miss Julia Belmont and her Guide to the curiosities of Lindford.

By and by we arrived at the quiet, sluggish river,

engaged our boat, and started, Miss Amelia taking the ribbons to steer, Mrs. Fitzwalton establishing herself near me in the bow, and Mr. Fitzwalton taking stroke oar.

We had hardly got well under way when we saw a pair-oared boat ahead of us.

"That's Tom Folgate's boat," said Fitzwalton, looking round. "Let's pull up and have a race."

On reaching Folgate's boat we found it occupied, as our own was, by two gentlemen and two ladies.

"How's the fair coxswain?" asked one, their bow oar.

"Very well, thank you," said Miss Amelia, taking the title as though it had been honorably conferred by some powerful institution.

"Tom, we are going to race you."

"All right—fire away, sir," said Tom. "Amelia shall start us."

"One, two, three!" said Amelia, with a little laugh, carefully managed with respect to that decayed tooth.

Away went the two boats. We all rowed in downright earnest. The ladies cheered us on. I pulled with all my might. Only a vigorous spurt now and then, on either side, made the slightest difference. Once we had nearly fouled our opponents, but this was in the fair coxswain's efforts to get the best water at a bend of the river. The young lady was successful, which made up somewhat for the additional weight we carried in our stern.

When the Halfway House came in sight we were slightly in advance. At the goal we had the advantage by nearly a boat's length. Then, in an exhausted condition, we laid down our oars. It was with no little difficulty that I landed after this terrible exertion. My fagged look excited the interest of the ladies and the sympathy of the men.

Tom Folgate said I was a plucky little beggar. He had heard of me before, and was very glad to meet me—yes, and to be beaten by me, too.

"Heard of me!" I said, in some surprise, when Tom handed me a foaming bumper of shandy-gaff.

"Yes. Why old Mitching is continually talking about you."

"Indeed," I said.

"Does nothing else; you're quite a hero in his eyes; and Mrs. Mitching says you are the dearest young man."

Then all the ladies laughed, and Miss Amelia repeated Tom's words, "The dearest young man!"

I felt a little confused at this, but I had presence of mind enough to say—

"Then here's Mrs. Mitching's health!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Tom Folgate. "Sweet Ann Mitching!"

The ladies tittered again. Then, at the suggestion of Mr. Fitzwalton, we walked out into the Halfway House tea-gardens, and thence into the open meadows beyond, where every little breeze brought with it the scent of newly-mown hay. Here we met

another aquatic party, and Miss Amelia considering it necessary to captivate a youth of fifteen summers and his father, Tom Folgate and I had an opportunity for the exchange of further compliments.

Tom Folgate stood, at least, six feet in his boating shoes; but his was one of those compact figures that look much less than they are. He had a dark blue eye, prominent lips, a well-cut nose, and red, crisp, curly hair. All his actions denoted firmness and passion. He had a long, manly stride; and a loud, full laugh. He spoke in a deep voice; said cynical things with a noisy kind of relish; and swept away all minor considerations of the proprieties with a contemptuous flourish of his arm.

"I don't set up for a saint," he would say; "nor any such dam nonsense. I have seen the world, and know what humbug there is in it. Don't talk to me of virtue and patriotism. Rot! I know all about it, Kenny, my boy; but it is all right to believe in it, if you can. Don't let me influence you. Look at Fitzwalton's sister-in-law: there's an example of the world, if you like: as hollow as hell!"

This was Tom Folgate's language to me after we had all returned to Lindford that night, and after I had smoked two cigars with him at his rooms.

"I like you, Christopher Kenrick; and I shall call you Kenny, as Mr. Mitching does. Eh? What do you say? May I?"

"Oh, yes," I said.

"You call me Tom, and let us be friends. It's a

twopenny-halfpenny hole, this Lindford; and a fresh-hearted friend, like you, is a novelty here, I can tell you. I like a fellow who's had the pluck to cut his home and stand up for himself."

"I have sometimes felt sorry that I did so," I replied.

"You've got sensibilities, I suppose," replied Tom. "Beastly things to have; get rid of them at once. Don't care for anything or anybody; work your own way according to your lights; don't be licked in anything you undertake; and let sensibilities and all such rot go to the devil."

It was not long before I discovered that Tom Folgate, like many others, did not altogether act upon his own advice. His was a strange, contradictory, passionate nature. This cynical fellow had evidently been struggling with sensibilities all his life. A wise writer has somewhere said that fine sensibilities are like woodbines, delightful luxuries of beauty to twine round a solid, upright stem of understanding; but very poor things if, unsustained by strength, they are left to creep along the ground. My dear friend Tom had evidently been hampered with sensibilities; had thrown them down, and left them to creep and trail where they pleased, to be trodden on and bruised, and he had felt their wounds.

Railing against everything, he reminded me of the incident which Goldsmith relates in his "Letters from a Citizen of the World," where the man in black encounters the beggars, and whilst talking of

the enlargement of prisons and the crime of beggary, relieves the mendicants on the sly. I cannot say that, in the end, this judgment of mine was altogether verified. I would not have upon my soul the crimes of Tom Folgate for Valentine's

> "Twenty seas, if all their sands were pearls,
> The water nectar, and the rocks pure gold."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. MITCHING GIVES A PARTY.

"We are going to have a few friends this evening, Mr. Kenrick; will you come?" said Mrs. Mitching, addressing me a few days after my boating excursion.

Duly appreciating the honor thus conferred upon me, I accepted the invitation with pleasure. I told Mrs. Mitching that I felt honored by her kind remembrance of me.

"Bring your violin: we intend to have a little music. Mr. Tom Folgate is coming; Mr. Wilton and the Miss Wiltons, Mr. Fitzwalton and Mrs. Fitzwalton, and some other people are expected."

Mr. Mitching was in a desperate fuss when I arrived, balancing his eye-glasses at everything with praiseworthy perseverance, and now and then saying pleasant things to his wife with a becoming amount of admiration and humility. Mr. Mitching never made speeches to his wife, but he did to everybody else. He button-holed people like the Ancient Mariner, and addressed them as if they were the Lindford Town Council or the British House of Commons. But Mrs. Mitching would not consent to be treated as an audience; and the pompous old gen-

tleman respected any wish of Mrs. Mitching's wit awe and reverence.

"The first arrival, Christopher," he said, as I entered. "The first arrival; that's right. Punctuality my boy, is the soul of success;—punctuality, my boy, is appreciated at the *Lindford Herald;* punctuality—"

"George! let us ignore the shop to-night," said Mrs. Mitching.

"Certainly, my dear," said Mr. Mitching, in reply.

"And don't make speeches at present."

"By no means, my love; I was merely remarking that—"

"Then, don't remark, my love. Mr. Kenrick, how do you do?"

She was in one of her grand moods, this pretty little woman; and Mr. Mitching knew how to be submissive upon such occasions.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Kenrick?" said the lady, looking down at her white gauzy dress, and then surveying herself in a mirror where her pinky-white complexion, her blue eyes (set off with just a gentle shadow, put on with a camel-hair brush), looked still more enchanting by the aid of a little distance and a sombre wall-paper.

How do I know that Mrs. Mitching used artificial means to enhance her beauty? Never mind, my friend. You may take it for granted that I will not deceive you. Mrs. Mitching was a beautiful woman; but she was not content to be simply beautiful, she

wished to be altogether overpowering; so she increased the brilliant dazzle of her eyes by artificial means; and I am not prepared to say whether she did not paint, ever so little—ever so little, I say, because she might have had all that rosy bloom without painting. She was one of the prettiest, most fascinating little women I ever saw in my life; but there was at times just a trifle of mystery in her conversation, and just a twinkle of devilry in her eye, that it were mere folly to try and interpret.

"There! that is your editor's ring, I am sure. Go and meet him, George."

Mr. Mitching thereupon darted to the drawing-room door, and received Mr. Noel Stanton, the conductor of that illustrious journal at Lindford, upon which I had the honor of a leading appointment.

Mr. Noel Stanton was a gentleman who believed in one man, who had the highest respect for the genius and ability, and experience and honor of one individual. Mr. Noel Stanton believed in Mr. Noel Stanton. It was the leading principle of his life to assert the superiority of Mr. Stanton's judgment and Mr. Stanton's ability. No matter that you looked in vain for any brilliant example of Mr. Noel Stanton's genius in the *Herald*, Mr. Stanton knew everything, could do everything, had seen everything. On the smallest provocation he would take off his spectacles, rub them with his silk handkerchief, and tell you so. Yet he was evidently a young man. If you threw out a gentle hint that he was young to

have had so much experience, he would tell you that he had lived; yes, sir, lived. He had not muddled away existence; he had not been in Lindford all his life. On the contrary, he had only been in Lindford three years, during which time he had made himself too valuable to the place for Lindford ever to do without him. Was he not the life and soul of the *Herald?* Had he not put down the bumptiousness of the opponents whom he found rampant against Mitching's paper when first he came to Lindford? Had he not asserted the power and independence of the press against the overbearing insolence of the lord-lieutenant? Had he not defeated, in a famous controversy, the most powerful cleric in the city? And, above all, had he not increased by many hundreds the circulation of the *Herald* amongst the higher and most intellectual classes of Lindfordshire? If you had the slightest doubt upon these points, Mr. Noel Stanton would wipe his glasses, and convince you, without for one moment begrudging the valuable time which his explanations would occupy. He would dine with you afterward, and win your money at whist or billiards with a degree of condescension and magnanimity perfectly charming to behold.

"Ah! how do you do, Mr. Stanton? how are you, sir?" Mr. Mitching fussily exclaimed, when the illustrious editor appeared.

"How do you do, Mitching?" said Mr. Noel Stanton, in reply, adjusting his shining spectacles

with both hands. "Very warm, Mitching. Ah! Mrs. Mitching, I hope I find you well this evening?"

If there was one man whom I admired up to the commencement of Mrs. Mitching's party, for his intellectual power, and his general knowledge of the world, above all others, it was Mr. Noel Stanton. I checked off in my mind his personal attributes and his wise sayings with great relish. I little thought that the day would arrive when I should square up at him in his own room, and plant my right full upon his proboscis, as they would say in the ring.

He looked quite *distingué* on the night of this famous party. His blue frock-coat, light waistcoat, and gray trousers were perfect. He explained to Mrs. Mitching that he had not dressed *de rigueur*, understanding that the entertainment was not a dinner-party, but rather a pleasant evening meeting *en famille*. He adjusted his stiff stick-up collars as he said so, and wriggled further into his coat. His hair was in elaborate, frizzy curls. His whiskers, in furzy-looking clumps, rested upon his collar, and made his sharp, incisive nose look all the sharper.

Mr. Mitching always subsided in presence of Mr. Noel Stanton. The bright, sparkling spectacles of the editor seemed to cut out even Mr. Mitching's heavy gold rimmers, which the proprietor balanced in vain on his capacious nose, or poised argumentatively between the thumb and finger of his right hand. Mr. Stanton had only to take off his light *and elegant spectacles*, rub them deliberately, and

then replace them, to overawe and completely vanquish the gentleman of the gold rimmers. This reminds me that the more irreverent citizens of Lindford called Mr. Noel Stanton "Specs," varied occasionally with the cognomen of "Collars." Wherever you saw him, your eye would always fall, in the first place, upon his spectacles, the dazzling brilliancy of which sent you speedily in retreat to his collars. I hold that there is character in shirt collars. You could have sworn, had you seen Mr. Stanton's collars hanging out to dry, as I often did, that they belonged to an extraordinary man.

Well, Mr. Stanton had hardly arrived when my big, red-headed friend Tom Folgate arrived also, and made a great point of shaking hands with me, and complimenting me upon my boating capabilities.

Tom was got up in full evening dress; and, if he had been a newspaper man, he would probably have cut out Mr. Stanton in my estimation; but Mr. Folgate was only an engineer, and, what is more, he had rather a mean opinion of the press and press men. He used to call Mr. Mitching an old fool, and Noel Stanton a conceited ass, which, for a time, rather lowered Mr. Folgate in my estimation, though there was a certain manliness about Tom which could not fail to impress everybody in his favor.

The next arrival was my gushing friend, Mr. Fitzwalton, his bright-eyed little wife, and his lazy, languishing, buxom sister-in-law, Miss Birt.

Whilst Mrs. Mitching was doing the amiable, as the modern phrase goes, to Mrs. Fitzwalton and her cheery, chatty consort, Mr. Mitching tried to make a grand speech to Miss Birt in a quiet corner; but the plot was discovered by Mrs. Mitching, who speedily defeated the daring rebel, thus enabling Miss Birt to take the seat which I gallantly offered to her; whereupon Miss Birt smiled most pleasantly upon me, with due and proper consideration for her decayed tooth.

It seemed as if it were the fate of that young lady in the lama frock to flash upon me and surprise me into inextricable confusion upon all occasions. I had scarcely told Miss Birt how glad I was that she had come, when I looked up to discover in the youngest Miss Wilton my unknown beauty. For a moment I seemed to lose myself in a kind of mental fog, that left me blushing and bowing to the two Miss Wiltons, whom I had first seen on that memorable evening in the High Street.

Tea and coffee were being handed about, and some other persons had come in, before I quite knew what I was doing. Indeed, it was not until Miss Birt had plunged through the heat and turmoil of "The Battle of the Prague," and got into the cries of the wounded and all the other pomp and circumstance of that valuable composition, that I recovered my self-possession sufficiently to speak to Esther Wilton's mother.

Mr. Noel Stanton led the fat and fair Miss Birt,

in a high state of excitement, to a seat close by my chair, and she at once proceeded to assail the editorial heart in a manner that was by no means disagreeable to Mr. Stanton, who proceeded to impress her, in return, with an account of his distinguished family connections, and of certain romantic incidents in his remarkable journalistic career.

Presently I found courage enough to address Esther Wilton, and I am bound to say that she did not seem quite so self-possessed as I have seen her since upon many more trying occasions than that of an evening party. I have a faculty for remembering little details of manner and expression long after they occur, and I shall never forget the soft tremor of her first words, and the slightly nervous action of that tantalizing little fan behind which she occasionally hid a blush or a smile.

She was a perfect picture of health, this round, dimpled beauty, with pouting lips and supple waist. Her mother was evidently a quiet, weak, affectionate, silly old woman, and her sister Emmy, a sharp, clever girl. Between them they succeeded in keeping Esther in a constant state of alarm as to her general behavior. Esther had the manner of a pretty slave, who had not her own way, and was continually throwing out appeals for assistance. And no wonder; for she had two other sisters besides Emmy, two elderly sisters, the offspring of Mrs. Wilton's first husband, and these ladies had succeeded in getting the upper hand over Mrs. Wil-

ton, though their influence was sometimes checked by the bad conduct of a married brother, who had been their especial favorite, and who occasionally amused himself by turning his wife and family out of doors, whilst he smashed all his furniture, and went to sleep blind drunk amidst the *débris*.

This, however, is by the way. Let us return to that hot, stuffy drawing-room, and listen to the serio-comic, half-sentimental, half-humorous ballad which Mrs. Mitching is singing with so much zest; whilst Tom Folgate turns over the leaves and looks into her languishing eyes, evidently to the discomfort of Miss Emmy Wilton, who is watching him from a distance.

"Thank you. Very well sung, indeed," said Mr. Noel Stanton, when the song was finished; whilst Tom Folgate took the lady's hand like a prince on the stage, and led her to her seat, where, after carefully disposing her dress to the best advantage, she fell back into a sea of muslin, and looked provokingly bewitching. By and by Tom Folgate went and sat near Miss Emmy Wilton, who treated him with marked coldness, and cast a scornful glance at Mrs. Mitching.

Then I was called upon to produce my violin, which I did with more than my customary nervousness. Miss Emmy Wilton accompanied me, at sight, in a little piece arranged by a noted performer. We got through the duet without actually breaking down, *but it was a melancholy* exhibition, and with the

exception of Esther Wilton and her mother, this seemed to be the opinion of the audience generally. I hid my diminished head in a corner afterward, close by Esther and her mother. The former said, with a sweet smile, that I played beautifully; whilst Mrs. Wilton, endorsing the opinion of her daughter, went into the family history of two persons who played the fiddle when she was a girl, one of whom cut his throat during a seizure at his house for rent; and the other was made fun of for many a year, because during an attack upon him by robbers he was reported to have exclaimed, "Take my life, but spare my fiddle!"

I smile at myself now when I think how complacently I sat and listened to that poor old woman's stories, laughing promptly at the proper place, and sighing when she did. Esther looked at me and smiled, and I made up my mind to summon up courage enough to take her down to supper; but during a momentary word or two with Tom Folgate, that wretched "Specs" came forward and secured Esther—that wretched "Specs," I say, for I hated him just then with a mortal hatred; and as I blundered down-stairs with some wheezy old woman, whose name I had not heard, I muttered to myself, "Conceited ass!" "Specs!" "Collars!" and a variety of other epithets by no means complimentary to Mr. Noel Stanton.

How it came about that Miss Birt allowed Mr. *Stanton to escape* her is a mystery to me, even now,

unless it arose out of some blundering upon the part of Mr. Mitching, who walked off fussily with Miss Birt, before Mrs. Mitching had time to make him take down Mrs. Wilton.

During supper I looked across two lobsters, a pair of chickens, and a ham at Miss Esther Wilton. She was certainly not displeased at my most unmistakable glances of love and admiration. I drank champagne in an abstracted sort of way, and nibbled the crust of a hard-baked roll; but I ate nothing. I drank champagne, and composed imaginary verses in praise of Esther's beauty, and gradually found myself getting away into a world of my own, in which there was a multitude of lights, a confused mass of faces, and a jumble of lobsters, chickens, jellies, and other dainties, which people were talking about and praising in a stupid, idiotic kind of manner that seemed puzzling, but not at all strange.

I remember quietly slipping out into the hall, and leaving the house in a strange, wandering fashion, and sitting in the porch of the old church close by, until I heard a voice that sounded like Mrs. Mitching's say, in a whisper, "Good-bye, dear." Then I saw Tom Folgate, with his hands in his pockets, lounge past me, and heard him sigh a great sigh, whether of pain or relief, I could not distinguish.

"Hollo, sir!" I said.

"Hollo! Who are you? Why, Kenny, as I live!" replied Tom. "Everybody was wondering what had become of you."

"Indeed, sir?" I stammered.

"Yes. Weren't you well, eh, Kenny?"

"No, I was not well," I replied.

Then Tom laughed a loud laugh, and took me by the arm, and said, "Come along, my boy."

And we went home, Tom laughing all the way at my abuse of "Specs," whom I did not hesitate to denounce as a conceited stuck-up ass, which was a most ungrateful thing to do, seeing that he had always behaved most kindly to me; but it is human nature to let the smallest offence shut your mind to the memory of former kindnesses. Moreover, it often happens that you dislike a person on account of some unintentional wrong on his part, and you never give him the opportunity to set himself right with you. I quite hated Noel Stanton on that night, and I am sure he does not know to this day that he annoyed me by taking Esther Wilton down to supper.

When I left Tom Folgate at my own door, or rather when he left me there, he pointed to a light in a bedroom window about six houses off, and at right angles with mine.

"You see that, Kenny?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

"That is Esther Wilton's room. I fancy Emmy and Esther sleep together."

When I said "Good-night," and the sound of Tom's firm tread began to grow faint in the distance, *the light at* Wilton's disappeared, and a head cov-

ered with curls looked out for a moment into the quiet night.

If "hanging and wiving goes by destiny," as the ancient saying quoted by Nerissa hath it, what is my destiny? I remember to have asked myself as I stood there with my latch-key watching, in a very maudlin fashion, I fear, the window where that dear head appeared. It occurred to me that it would be a good thing to settle that point as soon as possible. If I could have said, "Draw the curtain, Nerissa, and bring me to that mysterious casket," I would have sealed my fate at once. I was not accustomed to drink champagne in heated rooms, and Tom Folgate should have opened that disgusting door of Mrs. Nixon's for me. It is an old joke to say that somebody had tampered with the lock. I don't know how long I stood upon that lonely doorstep. There is an incident in "Hard Times" which made a great impression upon me when I read it. Two fellows intoxicated on the highway are asked for assistance in a case of life and death. One of them comprehends presently what is expected of him, and plunging his face into a pool of cold water, stands up before the half-crazed woman, sober and a man. There was no pool of cold water near Nixon's, or I should have been glad of it; for my head ached and my brain throbbed like an engine with extra duty imposed upon it. I am in doubt to this day how long it was before that obstinate lock yielded to my

latch-key; but I know I quoted Mr. Feeble over and over again, "An' it be my destiny, So; an' it be not, So;" but whether this had reference to the possibility of my destiny leading me to wait on the door-step until the milk came in the morning, or applied to the chance of my marrying Esther Wilton, will always be involved amongst several other subjects of doubt associated with the closing scenes of Mrs. Mitching's party.

CHAPTER IX.

FAMILY CRITICISM; DURING WHICH THE STORY GOES ON.

"I SUPPOSE you called upon the Wiltons the next day after the party, and left your card?" said my youngest daughter, Cissy, when we all sat out on the lawn for the ostensible purpose of talking about Christopher Kenrick's early life.

"I did call, miss; but as my card in those days was of a purely professional character, disclosing the fact that I was retained by the *Lindford Herald*, I did not leave it; nor should I have called had not Mrs. Mitching taken an early opportunity on that next day, to ask me, when I did call, to be the bearer of her compliments and kind inquiries."

"Oh, pa, how thoughtless—and when you were in love with the youngest Miss Wilton, too!" said Cissy.

"I was not acquainted with all the little details of social etiquette, my love, in those days."

"Did you see the young lady?" asks my youngest daughter again.

"No; but I met her in the street, and stopped and spoke to her."

"Did she speak first?"

"No, I spoke first."

"And you stopped her, too. Oh, how rude, papa!"

"Then, you see, I was desperately in love with her, Cissy."

"If the Reverend Paul Felton had stopped me after a mere introduction at a party, I should have cut him," says Cissy, with wonderful firmness.

"Should you, indeed?" says that very gentleman, who had sauntered up behind us whilst we were speaking; whereupon Cissy looks confused for a moment, then laughs coquettishly, and tells the Rev. Paul Felton the incident which we are discussing, with the rules of society for regulating such meetings.

"Bother the rules of society!" says Bess. "The rules of common sense and humanity should have the first consideration."

"Which rules are supposed," said the Rev. Paul Felton, in his deep bass voice, "to be contained in that admirable code of laws which society has laid down for the general good. I quite support Miss Cissy in the position she has taken. I should think very meanly of a young lady who permitted such a social breach of etiquette as the one instanced by Cissy."

"Oh, Mr. Felton!" exclaims my wife, "are you speaking seriously?"

"Most certainly, Mrs. Kenrick. By the way, I have an appointment at the church in ten minutes

about a question interesting to Miss Cissy, and I called to ask for her company thither."

Whereupon my youngest daughter trips away for her bonnet, and in five minutes, Bess, Mrs. Kenrick, my son Harry, and myself, are left to ourselves.

"Somehow I cannot like Mr. Felton," my son remarks.

"He is too good by half," says Bess.

"Nonsense, nonsense," I say; "it would not be well for the clergy to recognize any interference with those rules of etiquette which bind society together."

In my heart, though, I rather sympathized with my eldest daughter's observation; and in the end we all had reason to agree with her.

"Your friend, Tom Folgate, seems to have been a jolly fellow," remarks Harry, whose objections to the first part of my story have been somewhat allayed by the plaudits of a sensible public and the praises of an independent and enlightened press...!

"Yes; he was in love with Emmy Wilton. I did not know this when he pointed out her house to me, though his quick perception had detected that I was what you young men of the present day call spooney on Esther."

"That miserable creature, Mrs. Mitching, was in love with Tom Folgate; there can be no doubt about that," says my wife, as she pours out the coffee.

"Yes; that is a very sad story," I say; "but

Mitching was such a stupid, fussy, silly, good fellow."

"No; but, my dear," says Mrs. Kenrick, "nothing can be said in her defence."

"Oh, don't say that, mother," rejoins Bess, who is a strong-minded young lady, as the reader will already have observed. "Perhaps her parents compelled her to marry this Mitching, with his everlasting gold-rimmed glasses."

"No matter, Bess; nothing in the world could justify her conduct," says Mrs. Kenrick, promptly.

"She was a bewitching little woman," I rejoin. "I almost fell in love with her myself. I would have done anything in the world for her."

"You seem to have been rather general in your admiration," says Bess. "For my part, so far as the story has gone, I like Julia Belmont best. Did you desert that young lady altogether after you saw Miss Wilton?"

"No, Bess, I called upon Miss Belmont, and also upon the Fitzwaltons, during the next evening, and went with the Fitzwaltons to the theatre, where Miss Amelia set about captivating the audience generally, but more particularly favoring the light comedian with her fascinating attentions."

"Do you not think, sir," asks my eldest daughter, "that you take the reader of this story too much into your confidence?"

"You think there is not sufficient mystery in the plot?"

"I fancy the incidents are a little tame, Governor," says my son, in an apologetic tone.

"I have heard you say, father, that there should be a certain amount of mystery in a story as well as in a picture. Indeed, you condemned that last painting of mine because it was too faithful a transcript of nature," says Bess.

"If there is to be any charm whatever for the reader in this story, it will be the charm of truthfulness. I am painting portraits, Bess, not pictures."

"The old painters made their portraits pictures, father."

"And so shall mine be pictures; but there must be no mystery in the reader's mind as to identity. Now a landscape, Bess, should have a certain amount of mystery in it, as Tom Taylor has recently been telling you; and he instances, I think, the genius of Turner as an example of poetic landscape painting."

"What a pity it is Tom Taylor did not tell us in his sketch, 'Among the Pictures,' that capital story of Turner, which is the key to his essay."

"Well, what is the story?" I ask,—Bess pausing, as though she has concluded.

"A friendly critic said to Turner, 'Your pictures are undoubtedly splendid works; but I never saw such landscapes in nature as you paint.' 'No,' said Turner; 'don't you wish you had?'"

"Do you not think," says Mrs. Kenrick, becoming interested in the new turn of our conversation, "that

art and literature in the present day suffer by the rapidity of production? I have just been reading Mrs. Henry Wood's last book. They say she writes two or three novels a year."

"Miss Braddon and Mrs. Wood have, I believe, written several stories at the same time, and had them running in different serials."

"What sort of work can you expect under such circumstances?"

"I do not care to criticise my contemporaries, and more particularly when they are ladies," I reply. "Both these women *can* write. I don't think I object to rapid production. Pope said the things he wrote fastest always pleased most. Shakspeare wrote 'The Merry Wives' in a fortnight."

"Shakspeare!" says Bess to herself, as if she deprecates all mention of the bard with any other writer.

I continue my illustrations: "Dryden wrote 'St. Cecilia' at a sitting. Scott penned his novels with great rapidity. Balzac would shut himself up in a room and never leave it until his novel was finished. Dickens writes rapidly, but corrects and finishes laboriously."

"Is our favorite novelist's manuscript hard to read?" asks my wife.

"Dickens' manuscript is what printers call bad copy. Shirley Brooks writes plainly and with very little revision. Douglas Jerrold's copy was almost as good as copperplate. Lord Lyttelton, who moved

a clause to the Reform Bill that nobody should have a vote who could not write a legible hand, writes so illegibly that the clerks at the table could not read the resolution which he handed in. Tom Taylor writes as if he had wool at the end of his pen. It is urged that neat, careful writing often indicates a clear, thoughtful, scholarly mind. Lord Lyttelton and Tom Taylor are marked instances to the contrary."

Then the conversation branches off into the broad question of the character which marks handwriting, and thence we get back to Noel Stanton, a specimen of whose caligraphy I have in my pocket. Bess says it is a pompous, stiff hand; she could read his character in his t's and y's. And this reminds me that Tom Folgate wrote a big schoolboyish hand, Mitching a plain, concise small hand. Miss Julia Belmont's was a free and open style. I have one of her letters by me, which I promise to show Bess. Amelia Fitzwalton wrote in a very pointed, lady-like style, and crossed her letters to such an extent that you could not read them. Esther Wilton's was a timid, sprawling style of handwriting. But, oh, how dear to me!

Whilst I am thinking this and lighting a fresh cigar, Cissy returns.

"I want to know something more about Miss Wilton, papa," she says. "What did you say to her in the street?"

"*I really forget;* but I did a ruder thing than

that which shocked you so much, Cissy. I walked by her side until I came to Mitching's shop, and told her how anxious I had been to know her. I stammered this out in a stupid kind of way; but she smiled as if she were inclined to say the same."

"Shocking! Well, and what did Tom Folgate do?"

"Why, a week afterward he came and took rooms in the same house where I lodged, and we went courting together."

"Here comes your lover again," says Bess, interrupting our talk, as Mr. Felton appeared in the distance. "It is getting chilly. I think we had better adjourn to the drawing-room, and make father try over some of those trios with us."

We do adjourn accordingly; but I decline to unlock that old violin case, preferring instead, for various important reasons, to go to my study and write the next chapter in this eventful history.

CHAPTER X.

ESTHER, EMMY, PRISCILLA, BARBARA.

THE Wiltons were a strange family.

Mrs. Wilton, my landlady informed me, had been a woman of considerable fortune; but her two marriages had been most disastrous.

"Disastrous to the husbands?" I inquired.

"To all parties," Mrs. Nixon replied.

"In both cases Mrs. W. married beneath her; and in the second instance her husband drunk himself to death."

"There is no doubt about this, Mister Kenrick," she continued, in her loud way. "They're a queer lot: the mother is a softy; she lets them two old megs do just what they please: as for the youngest, they put on her a good deal; and then there's that married brother, a disgrace to all creation. If I was thinking of marriage, I should be very sorry to get into that family; so there! Mr. Folgate may think what he likes of that remark."

Mr. Folgate had been lodging at Nixon's, in the next rooms to mine, for several weeks when Mrs. Nixon talked to me in this loud and by no means agreeable strain. We both visited at the Wiltons. Indeed Tom had established a sort of position in the family as Emmy's beau; and I was rapidly making

a position on the strength of my undisguised admiration for Esther.

The first difficulty that presented itself to me on my visits to the Wiltons was a strange delusion which had taken possession of the virgin mind of Miss Priscilla Wilton, the eldest of the two "megs" alluded to by Mrs. Nixon. Miss Priscilla (who was thin and melancholy, and required frequent tablespoonfuls of brandy to sustain her delicate frame) insisted upon believing that I came there to see her. She was always the first to come forward and greet me, and the last to shake hands with me at parting, following me more than once to say a tender word or two in the hall.

Miss Barbara, the other meg, as Mrs. Nixon persisted in calling her, was a morose beauty. She read cheap novels, and played fiercely at whist or loo, invariably winning, whosoever might be her opponents. She regarded all of us as fools, though she showed some little extra consideration for me.

It was soon made tolerably clear to my mind that Esther Wilton occupied in this household very much the position of Cinderella in the fairy tale. She waited on everybody; she seemed to supplement the two servants; she was at everybody's beck and call; and both Barbara and Priscilla would often address her in anything but a respectful or sisterly manner.

We talked about this many times, I and Tom Folgate. He said if it had not been at Emmy's solicitation, he should have kicked up a row about it be-

fore now. One day he had told the old woman that it was an infernal shame she should allow her eldest daughters to put upon the younger ones; but this had only resulted in Esther and Emmy being more shamefully treated than before.

"Why, hang it," said Tom, in his rough way, "I caught Emmy cleaning the doorstep one day; and I kicked the bucket to the devil. Mrs. Wilton wanted to gammon me that Emmy did it of her own accord."

Had I not been so desperately in earnest about Esther, the *naïveté* of the spinster Priscilla would have been highly diverting. I had often made up my mind to tell Esther that I loved her, and ask her mother to let us be engaged like Tom and Emmy, with whom we occasionally went for a walk.

At length the opportunity offered itself. On a pleasant summer evening I encountered Esther alone, at the farther end of the High Street, by the common. She had been to see a married sister, and take her little niece a present.

"Will you let me escort you home, Miss Esther," I said, "and go across the common?"

Esther said she would; but we must walk quickly.

When we had reached that long clump of tall wavy rushes which shuts in the sluggish river, and makes a shady path for happy lovers, Miss Wilton asked me if Miss Birt was quite well.

"Yes, I believe so," I said.

"Emmy says she is dreadfully jealous of Miss *Belmont, the actress.*"

"Indeed! Why?"

"Because you take her out so often."

"I really do not understand you, Miss Esther," I said.

"Emmy thought you were engaged to Miss Birt," said Esther.

"I engaged! and to Amelia Birt. Why she makes love to everybody. I am *not* engaged, Miss Wilton."

It was in my mind to say I wished I were engaged, and then say to whom. How is it a fellow in love finds it so difficult to say out and out to a girl, "I love you," when he can flirt effectively and say all kinds of desperate things to one whom he does not love at all?

"Emmy says she hears you are nearly always at the Fitzwaltons, and she often sees you boating when she and Mr. Folgate are out together."

"Fitzwalton is one of my dearest friends," I say.

"Dearer than Mr. Folgate?" asks Esther.

"No; but I have known him longer."

"Emmy says Mr. Folgate loves you as if you were his own brother."

"Ah, he is a good fellow," I say, and I take Miss Esther's hand to lead her out of the way of two staring sheep that come down to seek the shade of the rushes.

"We must walk quicker, if you please, Mr. Kenrick," says Esther, whose hand I still retain.

"*Why* are you in such a hurry?" I inquire, bring-

ing my voice down to her own soft tones. "Will Priscilla be cross?"

"Priscilla! I don't know that she will."

Esther, it is clear, does not mean to say anything against her sisters; but I gradually and deftly draw from her quite enough to endorse my views of her position in the family; and a strong desire to be her protector takes possession of me. She is a forlorn maiden in my mind, from that moment—a persecuted, patient, soft-eyed Ariadne fastened to that family rock in Beverley Crescent, and I am destined to rescue her.

I lead the conversation again and again into this channel, until at last Esther looks up at me with her confiding blue eyes, and confesses that she is not so happy at home as she might be.

"But I shall soon be away from home now, though I don't like leaving Emmy."

"Away from home?" I say.

"Yes," she says.

"Tell me all about it, Miss Wilton; perhaps I may advise you."

She declines, however, to say more, and prefers to hurry faster and faster homeward; but I beguile her with the imaginary story of two young people; one a boy, the other a girl. The boy was miserable at home, and he ran away. Two years afterward he met a girl who was unhappy too. Upon this foundation I base a vague but romantic story of love and happiness.

By and by I win her confidence, and she tells me she is going to take a situation as nursery governess.

"But is this necessary?" I ask.

"Priscilla says I must go out—it is time I did something for my living."

"Monstrous!" I reply, seizing in imagination the thin arm of that vixen spinster.

"I am past sixteen; and Barbara, too, says I ought to be doing something. They have procured a place for me at Sheffield."

"This must not be," I say firmly; whereupon Esther looks up at me curiously, and having once commenced to talk freely, goes on.

"If it were not for Emmy I should be glad to go; it will be so much more independent to be away and earn my own living, and not be a burden to any one, and—"

And here Esther breaks down with a sob. Then all my courage comes. I stand before her in the twilight, and taking her hand, say—

"Oh, Esther! my dear Esther, let that precious burden be mine! I love you with all my heart and soul!"

"Let me go, Mr. Konrick," says Esther; "you frighten me. There is some one coming across the common; it is Mr. Folgate, I believe; let us go back. I must go home."

She dried her dear eyes, and we hurried away together, my heart beating at a terrific pace, and my *face burning* with excitement.

We neither of us spoke until we were nearly out in the road again; and then I said, "Esther, you do not love me!" but I must have said this in a half-boastful spirit; for Esther looked up with such a tender glance of reproach that I need not have cared to force a confession from her lips. It seemed to me, nevertheless, that I must hear her say she loved me; that I must fix her to that confession.

"Your story, Esther, is almost like that of the young lady I told you of; but she was happy at last, because she loved that runaway boy. But you do not love me as she loved him, do you?"

"I do," said Esther, quietly looking at me through her tears; and then we spoke no more. We knew that our destinies were fixed forever; and this was happiness too great for words.

How we moved onward in the twilight like two people in a happy dream afraid to wake, I remember now, as though the dream had never ended. The lamps were lighted in the streets when we came to Beverley Crescent. I could see by a glance over the way that Tom Folgate had lighted his candles. It was quite late. How the time had fled! Esther seemed nervous when I knocked at the door; but the color came back to her cheeks when the servant said there was only Mrs. Wilton at home. The "megs" had gone out to supper, and Emmy was at Mitching's. Mrs. Wilton said Esther was rather late; but she only seemed to make the remark by

the way, and she followed it up by inviting me to stay and have some supper.

Need I say that I cheerfully accepted the invitation? I never had been so happy in my life. Mrs. Wilton told me several stories of her childhood, and I listened with an air of interest that quite won the old lady's heart. Esther sat near me, in a quiet, confiding manner, until at length there was a sharp, biting, stinging kind of knock at the door. Soon afterward Priscilla and Barbara entered, whereupon that happy little party of three broke up. When I wished everybody good-night, I did not forget to squeeze Esther's dear little hand, nor to look fondly into her deep blue eyes, the windows of a true, pure, trusting, loving soul.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE PASSAGES.

For the time being my happiness was complete. Mrs. Wilton consented that I should be a frequent visitor at Beverley Crescent. Miss Priscilla treated me with the contempt which she considered I deserved. Barbara contented herself with cheating me at cards out of all my loose silver. Emmy patronized me in a pleasant, complimentary way. Esther always received me with the same dear smile, and always looked happier when I came.

Protected by many of the privileges of lovers, Esther and I wandered alone on quiet evenings down by the river; but generally Tom Folgate and Emmy were with us. Sometimes we went out on the river, and I call to mind many dreamy, happy days spent on that dear old Lindford water. It was such a lazy, easy-going, steady old river, with high banks here and there, and rushy nooks and feeders full of water-lilies and strange weeds. I remember me, sculling gently amongst this aquatic vegetation to gather lilies and rushes for Esther, who steered the boat into her favorite places. I can hear now the sliding, hissing sound of the boat, as it carves its way through the tangled weeds; and then I see

a sail hauled up, and a youth, sitting at a fair girl's feet, and deftly trimming the sail to suit the changing wind. I see the boat glide back again into the open river; I hear the gentle ripples at the bow, making a running accompaniment to the quiet talk of those two happy lovers.

Oh, what a gracious time it was! Did that boat gliding over the placid waters represent the peaceful course of our two lives? Or came there storm and tempest to tear that swelling sail, and wreck the little bark?

I was but a boy and she no more than a girl, in this dear old Lindford city; but "we loved with a love that was more than love," and it seemed to change all things unto us. The experience of a cold, hard childhood, my early battle with the world, stood me in good stead at this time. This saved me from a mere sentimental passion. It set me planning out the future. It trimmed the midnight lamp, and kept me wakeful over the hardest tasks. It opened up to me new fields of study. It sharpened my ambition. It made me a man.

"I can never hope," I said to Esther one autumn evening, as our boat lay amongst a crowd of fading lilies and half-browned leaves, "to be rich; I can never hope to give you such a home as Tom Folgate will prepare for Emmy."

Esther plucked the lilies, and looked at me, as much as to say, "I am yours, take me where you *will*."

"Emmy will have a beautiful house. Tom Folgate's salary is not less than five hundred a year."

I was very anxious that Esther should understand my position. I had learnt in the school of adversity to supplement romance with something of the practical.

"I have not one hundred, though I shall have presently. I cannot expect to have more than two hundred a year. But that will provide us a nice little house, a tidy little servant, and love will give us contented hearts. Eh, Esther, my darling?"

"I think a hundred pounds a year, Kenny, a very large sum; but I wish you would not talk of money. I should love you just the same if you had not a penny."

I kiss her fair white brow, gather up the great yellow lilies into a heap, pull taut the sail, and away we go into the autumn shadows.

"We shall visit Mr. and Mrs. Folgate in their grand house, and like our own little cot none the less, I am sure," I say.

Then we land at the boat-house, and go home to Beverley Crescent arm-in-arm, renewing our speculations anent the future that is in store for us.

Latterly Tom Folgate had grown dissatisfied with his course of love-making; his stream not only did not run smoothly, it was ruffled by all kinds of sudden squalls and tempests.

"Emmy," he said to me, over that last pipe which he smoked before going to bed, "Emmy is a mystery, Ken. She is everlastingly complaining of some fellow following her home, or of love-letters being sent to her. Yesterday, she tells me, that sneak, Stanton, has been speaking to a friend about making her an offer of marriage."

"Indeed!" I say, with much curiosity and surprise.

"Hang me, if I believe it! I want you to help me, Kenny, with your opinion. You are an honest, simple-minded fellow, and your views will represent those just opposite to my own."

Tom smoked, and pushed his big right hand through his red curly hair.

"You know by this time what it is to love a girl?"

"Yes," I reply, "I think I do."

"Well, I don't love in the way you love. I have no business to love a girl at all. I ought to be going about the world killing women rather than loving them. But somehow Emmy Wilton seems to have tamed all the roaring lion that was rife in my nature before I saw her. I'll tell you my story, some day, Kenny, and you will be sorry for me."

"I should be sorry for anything that gives you pain, Tom."

"Well, I'm awfully perplexed, Ken, just now. You see, women who are engaged are up to all sorts of manœuvres for hurrying on the wedding-*day.*"

I said "Yes," but I did not quite understand the drift of Tom's remarks.

"Now it has occurred to me, in spite of myself, that Emmy Wilton is working me. She wants to be married, and in order to hurry the business on, she tells me all sorts of tales to excite my jealousy, and make me fear I shall lose her, if I am not quick to name the day."

"Oh, Tom, a girl would not do such a thing as that!"

"What would you think of her if she did—if you found out that she lied, Kenny?" Tom asked.

"I should be quite sure that she did, before I doubted her in thought or word."

"Well, I am nearly sure Emmy has told me a lie. What would you do if you thought Esther had done the same by you?"

"I would not believe it if I knew it; I should be sure there was a horrible mistake somewhere."

"I am a suspicious beggar, Ken; and I know more about women than you do. I have thought Emmy Wilton the best and truest of them all, and under her influence I was becoming a steady, easy-going fellow. If I found her false, I'd whistle her out of my heart with as little remorse as your favorite hero, *Othello*, cut out the image of *Desdemona*."

"To discover at last, Tom, that you had been as unjust as the dusky soldier."

"Maybe, maybe," Tom replied. "I'm a miserable devil: and no wonder. There is no moral bal-

last in my composition, Kenny. I'm not even an honest fellow, in the proper sense of the term. I should be a thief if it were not for my infernal pride. I don't do beastly mean things simply because I'm too proud. If it were not for my pride, I should be a liar and anything else that is contemptible."

"Nonsense, Tom; you are cynical to-night."

"I believe you are an honest, plucky, good fellow, Ken; but for the rest of the world, between ourselves, I believe everybody else is a rogue, and Tom Folgate as big a quack as any other fellow. There! good-night, dear boy; we'll resume this subject at some future time. Good-night, Kenny!"

Just as I was going to bed I noticed upon the mantel-shelf of my sitting-room a letter which had come through the post. It was directed in an easy-flowing lady's hand. I opened it; and inside the envelope was written, "With Miss Julia Belmont's kind regards." The contents consisted of a circular, in which it was announced that the following Monday would be the last of the present season at the Theatre Royal, Lindford, upon which occasion the performances would be for the benefit of Miss Julia Belmont, who would appear in two of her most successful characters, supported by the full strength of the company.

The next morning I wrote a glowing paragraph, in which I drew the attention of the readers of the *Lindford Herald* to the important histrionic announcement which appeared in our advertising col-

umns that week; and, when this had duly passed the critical eye of Mr. Noel Stanton, I called upon Miss Belmont.

I found the lady in a loose morning-dress, with her arm in a sling.

"Oh, it is nothing," she said, as I looked at her with an air of sympathetic inquiry. "But I might have killed myself, sir, for all you would have known of the matter."

"I have been so much engaged lately," I stammered.

"No doubt. Studying the violin?" she asked, smiling.

"No," I said. "Have you had an accident, Miss Belmont?"

"Struck my arm against a nail in *Constance*. It is nearly well now; but I give it rest in the daytime."

"I am very sorry," I said.

"Sorry it is nearly well?" Miss Belmont replied, looking at me archly.

"Very sorry you had an accident," I said quietly. I felt rather uncomfortable in presence of her sparkling gray eye.

"Well, sir, sit down. I have been thinking about you every day, wondering if I had offended you."

I assured Miss Belmont that it would be impossible she could offend me. She said she was glad to hear it, because, truth to tell, she would be more sorry to offend me than any one in the world.

Of course I felt highly flattered at this, and I, no

doubt, looked all I felt. When she asked me in what way I had been so much engaged, I told her of my increased studies; I spoke of Mr. Mitching's party; I alluded to the Fitzwaltons; but, somehow or other, I said nothing about Esther Wilton. My short experience of being in love was sufficient for me to understand that it would hardly be wise to talk to Miss Belmont about Esther; and yet I nearly did so, over and over again.

By a deftly-worded addition to the paragraph in the *Herald*, stating that Miss Belmont had recovered from the effects of what might have been a serious accident, which happened to her whilst performing the other evening in "King John," some extra interest was felt in the lady's benefit; and there was a crowded house in consequence, Uphill graciously condescending to take several boxes. The Fitzwaltons were amongst the Uphills, and they had Mr. Noel Stanton with them. The Mitchings were Downhills; but Mrs. Mitching outshone her fashionable rivals of both cliques, and sat like a queen in her customary sea of muslin. The Wiltons were neither Uphills nor Downhills. I had the honor of sitting between Esther and Miss Barbara, whilst Tom Folgate sat near Emmy, and was expected to pay particular attention to Miss Priscilla.

How vividly the little theatre crops up in my memory—a little stuffy place, not half so big as the Olympic! It had been redecorated. You could *smell the size* and glue and paste of the paper and

paint that had been dabbed on the front of the dress-circle. New muslin curtains had been tacked over the two dress-boxes on the stage. The proscenium was adorned with florid studies of tragedy and comedy; and the light of the chandelier glimmered upon a circle of young loves on the ceiling. The gallery was very noisy. It entertained the house for some time with running comments upon the ladies and gentlemen in the boxes; it let its playbills fall over into the gas, and quarrelled about front-seats. The pit was redolent of sawdust and orange-peel; and ginger-beer was freely indulged in by the younger portion of the occupants. In the dress-circle everybody was radiant. Many faces shone with a ruddy country polish; many damsels in those days at Lindford preferred this healthy gloss to the powder-toned complexions of very high society. I remember what a show there was of fresh bright girls, and how the bucks of Lindford came out in white waistcoats and snowy shirt-fronts. I thought it was quite a grand and festal scene, and I was happy beyond description.

It was a merry play,—"The Taming of the Shrew," —and we all laughed and enjoyed ourselves immensely, except when Miss Belmont, at the close, delivered a farewell address. The whole theatre seemed inclined to urge the young lady to stay on the promise of their attendance every night. But that was in a moment of excitement, and Julia Belmont knew how transient this is when measured at

the close of the week by the pecuniary outlay of a country town in theatrical amusements.

I thought the fair actress's eye wandered to the box in which I sat; and indeed she told me the next day that she had seen me. I called to say good-bye, and I found her quite moved. She said the reception the night before had much affected her; Lindford had been so kind to her. She had never felt sensations of regret at leaving any place before. Would I write to her, and let her know how I got on in the world? My progress would have a special interest for her. I had been very kind to her, and she never forgot kindness. Her voice trembled slightly when she said this, and there was a little choking feeling in my throat that prevented me from making anything like a lively or cheerful reply. I could not say you overrate my little acts of courtesy. I could not say I have felt it an honor that you condescended to accept my little acts of service. I could say nothing. I should like to have taken her into my confidence about the girl in the lama frock; but I could not help feeling that this would prove uninteresting to her. At last she said, "Well, good-bye, Mr. Kenrick," and put out her hand. I shook it warmly, looked into her eyes, and said, "Good-bye, Miss Belmont; I hope we shall see you back in Lindford soon." She looked at me very earnestly, and by some extraordinary influence that seemed to be mutual in its action, our heads were drawn close *together, and* when I left the house it was with a

kiss on my lips, and a mental kind of dizziness that made me feel stupid. It seemed as if I was playing the part of a villain to the actress, and that of a "gay deceiver" to the girl in the lama frock; but we are over-sensitive about a kiss in these young days of love-making, and we exaggerate the importance of faltering voices and moist eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPINSTERS AND THEIR PRETTY SISTER.

BEFORE Miss Julia Belmont has turned her back upon Lindford, I find myself in that restless but determined mood which brings hot-headed youth into the presence of sober expectant parents, soliciting the honor and extreme gratification of being permitted to provide for one of their daughters.

In this state of mind I propose to Tom Folgate that he shall accompany me on a formal visit to Mrs. Wilton.

"What for, Kenny, my boy?" says Tom.

"I am going to ask her to let me and Esther be engaged."

"It's a serious business, Kenny," says Tom, thrusting his big hands into his pockets, and looking curiously at me.

I always notice his hair when I am talking to Tom; it sticks up like a plume over his forehead—a red waving plume. Nature evidently intended Tom for a very handsome negro, and then changed its mind and made him white. He has thick lips, and his hair is one mass of little curls all climbing up into that tuft on the top. But he is a manly, noble-looking fellow, and I feel as if I could go through *the world with him* and be his lieutenant.

When he says, "It's a serious business, Kenny," that bushy lock of hair nods warningly, and I watch it with modest respect.

"Do you think I shall be refused?"

"Can't say. She's a devilish pretty girl, Kenny; so round, and plump, and happy-looking."

"Oh, she is, Tom!" I exclaim.

"And when do you think of being married?"

"I don't know. How much will it cost?"

"A lot, my boy; but it will be cheaper marrying Esther than Emmy."

"Will it?"

"Emmy's got grander notions. She goes in for doing the swell."

"I have always had a sort of fear of Emmy; I stand in awe of her now."

"You can't marry and set up a house under, say, two hundred pounds."

"Indeed! Well, I haven't as many shillings."

"That's awkward," Tom says; and I repeat, "That's awkward."

"And how are you going to keep a wife, Kenny?"

"Keep her!"

"Yes."

"I don't know what you mean."

"What's your income?"

"About a hundred a year."

"That's no good, my boy."

"Is it not?"

"*No.*"

"Then I'll get more—two hundred, three, five if necessary."

"That's the way to say it, Ken,—spoken like a man! Bravo, Kenny! Come along; let us go and see the old lady."

We go. I pull my hat firmly upon my head and take Tom's arm with a fixed and settled resolution to win a home for Esther Wilton.

"Who is that?" I ask, when we are nearly on the threshold of the Wiltons.

"That swell who has just left the house?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Howard, a rich young gentleman whom Emmy is anxious that Esther should marry. They say he's worth five thousand a year."

I hate the fellow immediately, with a fierce hatred, and begin to dislike Miss Emmy, too."

"Does Esther care for the fellow?"

"Not a bit," says Tom. "But he's a well-looking, gentlemanly person."

"Oh, you think so! I don't."

"Of course not," Tom replies; and by this time we are on the doorstep.

Mrs. Wilton is alone, fortunately or unfortunately, I hardly know which.

Tom takes me in, and makes an excuse to leave us alone.

I say boldly what my business is. Mrs. Wilton is not surprised; but she weeps. I suppose it is proper *to weep under these* circumstances. She says it re-

minds her of her own youthful days. Her first husband was no older than I am when first she was engaged to him. But we are both too young, she says, and she cites her experience on the question.

I urge that all I wish is that she should sanction my visits, and permit us to be engaged if her daughter is willing. I own that I am not rich; but hint that I have hopes of rising in my profession.

She has no opinion of newspaper people, she says. It was one of those gentlemen who once visited the late Mr. Wilton and drunk himself into the workhouse. Newspaper persons and actors she fears even more than musicians and betting men.

I say there are glorious exceptions, and mention some great names amongst journalists.

She does not doubt that I shall get on, because everybody says so; but there's Mr. Howard, now,—he's rich, and a gentleman.

"Mr. Howard!" I exclaim. "You would not, I suppose, influence your daughter's choice, even if she selected a poor man in preference to a rich one."

"No, Mr. Kenrick; but it's good to have money, it is hard struggling without it."

And then Mrs. Wilton weeps again, and complains that hers is a trying situation.

I say that I will not press her to do anything which her judgment does not approve. Will she give me leave to hope that if I prove myself worthy of Esther, I may have the family's consent to marry *her some day?*

Yes, she will give me her word to that extent, she says. I kiss her hand, just as Emmy enters.

"Well, Mr. Kenrick, and how are you, sir?" says this dark beauty, looking first at me and then at her mother.

"Very well, indeed, thank you," I say, rising and returning her look with as much defiance as I can muster.

"I hope you have recovered from the excitement of the farewell benefit?"

"Yes, thank you, Miss Emmy."

"And I suppose Miss Belmont has gone for good?"

"I think so."

"You will be very lonely now."

She says this just as my own darling comes in—just as Esther comes smiling up to me, and gives me her hand, with a pleasant "How do you do, Mr. Kenrick?"

"Why do you think I shall be lonely, Miss Emmy?" I asked, blushing slightly, much to my annoyance.

"You will have no one to play duets with you now," Emmy replies.

"I very rarely played duets with Miss Belmont."

"Oh, I thought you were a constant visitor there," she replies, carelessly; and then she turns round to greet Tom Folgate, who comes in with Priscilla, and we are quite a family party now.

"Will you come and give us a little music, *Emmy?*" *Tom says.*

He always coaxes her away into the drawing-room if he can.

"No, thank you, Tom; not now."

"Do," says Tom.

"I would rather not; ask Mr. Kenrick, he is a great performer."

"I can hear Kenny perform at home," Tom replies. "Come, Emmy, do."

"Yes, come and play something, Emmy," says Esther, in a soft, low voice.

"No, thank you, I will not," she replies; taking some work from a basket, and sitting down to sew.

Tom looks savage, as if he would like to stamp his feet and say, "Hang it, you shall play;" and Emmy glances at him tauntingly, as much as to say, "Be angry, if you like;" and then the next minute she looks lovingly up at him, and says, "Come here, Tom, I want to talk to you," whereupon he is by her side, subdued and interested.

Priscilla orders Esther to go and fetch that book off the sideboard. She does not ask her to be good enough to go and bring it, she commands her as if she were a menial. I hate Priscilla. She is fifty if she is a day; her shoulders are high, she minces in her gait, and affects a simpering smile.

Esther has fetched the book: it is the wrong one.

"You stupid girl," says Priscilla, "if it was possible to bring the wrong one, of course you would do it; go and get the other one."

Esther goes, and I am boiling over with rage.

Why doesn't Mrs. Wilton prevent these elder daughters from domineering over the youngest, and prettiest, and best of them all?

The second book is the right one.

"Now just go and put my dressing-table in order," says Priscilla.

"And bring me my worked slippers," says Barbara, the fat, and gross, and bouncing sister.

Esther obeys meekly as if nothing unusual is occurring, and I am in agony. I look at Mrs. Wilton, she is dozing on the sofa. Tom and Emmy are talking with their heads close together in the window. Napoleon on a white horse is crossing the Alps at the other end of the room. A great flabby-looking cat is trying to get upon Priscilla's bony knees. And I am alone with my rage and passion.

Esther returns with Barbara's slippers (Barbarian's slippers, I say to myself). I look at her with all the love and sympathy I can. She returns me a timid glance, and is gone. Nobody speaks to me, and I wish I were gone too; but I make a desperate, fierce, burning resolution whilst I am sitting there gazing at Napoleon crossing the Alps. I will be revenged on Priscilla. Barbara shall suffer for her brutality. The fairy shall come and take my Cinderella to the ball. I will be the prince, and the slipper shall fit Esther.

I get up and say I think I must go.

"Won't you stay and have some tea?" Miss *Emmy asks.*

I say, "No, thank you," undecidedly.

"Oh yes, Kenny, you'll stay," says Tom.

"We shall have tea in a few minutes," Emmy adds.

"Thank you, I will stay," I reply.

I sit there looking at Napoleon still; but I am thinking of Esther at the degrading occupation of putting her eldest sister's dressing-table in order.

Tea comes at last, and Esther has to put hassocks for Priscilla's and Barbara's feet. If anything is wanting on the table, they do not ring the bell for the servant, but order Esther to get this or that, or fetch this or the other, until my tea nearly chokes me. Tom notices my uneasiness, and at last says, "Miss Esther will get no tea, shall I ring the bell?"

"No, thank you," says Priscilla, tartly, "I will go myself. It is coming to a pretty pass if it is too much trouble for the younger members of the family to wait upon their elders."

"Oh, it is no trouble," says Esther, getting up in a hurry.

"Oh, yes it is," says Miss Priscilla. "I can go; pray sit down."

"I did not know Miss Priscilla admitted that she was any one's elder here," says Tom, testily.

"Tom!—Mr. Folgate, don't be rude," says Emmy, looking half-approvingly, half in remonstrance, at Tom.

"Mr. Folgate, I thought you would have known better," says Barbara, glancing daggers and toasting-forks and hot-cups-of-tea-in-your-face at me.

"There, there; pray do not let us have a disturbance," says Mrs. Wilton, at last; and Miss Priscilla is heard angrily rating Esther outside the door. They both enter the next moment, Esther struggling evidently to keep back her tears, Miss Priscilla curling up her narrow, bony-looking nose, and crowding her shoulders up, and taking her seat with an air of injured innocence, laughable to behold, if one were not so desperately annoyed. If she were a man, I would kick her in the public street, I think; but that would not be right. Never do to kick Esther's relation.

I explain to Tom my feelings upon this point when we get home. He says there is a brother whom I can kick, if I like—a brother who has not so much compunction as I have about relationship—a brother who kicks his wife, Esther's sister-in-law—a wretched, drunken brother, who has spent thousands that ought to have belonged to those two girls. "The old woman will die a beggar yet, if she does not mind. A house divided against itself, and a mother giving way to those who don't care for her, and neglecting the youngest who do. That old woman would lay down her life for her drunken son, and go through any amount of misery at the command of those two megs, as Nixon calls the spinsters; *and here* are these two splendid girls, worth

their weight in gold—damn it, Kenny, it makes me mad to see the old fool!"

Tom is very angry.

I say Emmy does not seem to be put upon.

"No; she can take care of herself," Tom says. "And a most tantalizing, puzzling young lady she is too."

I look for an explanation.

"Ah, never mind now," Tom replies; "let us have a cigar, and go to bed, Kenny. It's a bad world."

We smoke and talk upon all sorts of subjects. Tom says very few people are properly mated. "Look at Mitchings, for instance. Mrs. M. cares nothing about Mr. Magnificence in spectacles." I say, "Nonsense, Tom." He replies that he knows the world, and he knows what women are. "Then, there's the Fitzwaltons. Mrs. F. is a regular spitfire." I say she is a pretty, agreeable woman. Tom says she's a fiery, bumptious woman; and if she had any respect for her husband, wouldn't she stop the vagaries of that sister of hers? He insists that very few married people are happy, and for his own part he does not think he should be happy himself. He hates women. They are a hollow, painted lot. Of course there may be exceptions. The proverbs of every country depict women as deceivers, slanderers, liars. Proverbs are the experience of the many. There must be truth in proverbs that agree with proverbs all over the world. I say he is a dreadful cynic. He says he knows that; but I tell

him he loves Emmy Wilton, nevertheless; and he says he knows that too.

Then we drift into other topics, and separate for the night. I know which is Esther's room. There is a light in it. I see it from my window, and I watch it until it disappears, making all the while a thousand resolutions to rescue Esther from the thraldom of those spinster sisters.

Acting upon one of these resolves, I consider it necessary to sit up all night and read vigorously. It is necessary that I should read solid books for the purposes of high-class journalism. I take up Burton, and read with all my might, making at the same time ample notes, more particularly upon chapter the sixth, concerning which I begin to think I am in a position to offer an opinion. It is daylight before I have completed my notes, with marginal comments in prose and verse, upon Arria with Poetus, Artemisia with Mausoleus, Rubenius Celer with his lovely Ennea, Orpheus with Eurydice. I go to bed and dream that Burton has been called upon to mention to future ages the felicity and increasing happiness of Christopher and Esther. I wake to find that I have overslept myself, and missed an important meeting at the Guildhall, which I ought to have attended. I rush off without my breakfast, get there in the middle of an address upon the sanitary condition of Lindford, and proceed to transfer it in Harding's hieroglyphics to that other note-book *which is the property* of my magnificent employer,

George Mitching, Esq. Somehow I fancy it is a stupid world, and this notion is not removed when I have written out for the printer a true and particular account of that most prosy meeting at the Guildhall.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHICH OUGHT TO BE PUBLISHED IN "BELL'S LIFE."

It was an eventful day, that upon which I left my home without breakfast after a night with Burton.

Latterly, Mr. Noel Stanton had been much less considerate in his dealings with me than formerly. He had strained his authority over me to such an extent that the *Lindford Herald* office was not the paradise it had been.

On this day in particular he was excessively rude to me, not to say insulting and tyrannical. I regret to say that his arbitrary and ungentlemanly conduct toward me brought us into a serious personal encounter.

I see my old friend and enemy now; I count him a friend to this day and esteem him; and what possessed him to provoke that combat in those past days is still to me one of those enigmas which time does not solve. Tom Folgate said it arose out of a double jealous feeling—jealousy at my progress in the duties of journalism, and jealousy of my familiarity with the Fitzwaltons. He was sweet on Miss Birt, and no doubt, Tom said, Miss Birt had played me off against him, to make him the more earnest and prompt in his declarations. Tom insisted that

this was the common practice of nearly all young ladies. However that might be does not matter now. Nothing could warrant Mr. Noel Stanton's conduct on this memorable day.

The editorial and reporting departments of the renowned *Lindford Herald* were close by St. Martin's Church. They were only separated from the churchyard by a narrow road that led to the river beyond. My room was the first on entering the building. Next to this was Mr. Stanton's; and here the literary department ended, shut off from the front portion of the building by Mr. Mitching's bedrooms, and other apartments of his private residence. On this memorable day aforesaid I entered my room, and after transcribing certain of those shorthand notes anent the sanitary condition of Lindford, I went to pay my respects to Mr. Noel Stanton.

My room was a very poor place. The furniture consisted of two chairs and a desk, a map of the county, three paper-weights, a metal inkstand, a paste-pot, a piece of cocoanut matting, a window-sill full of old newspapers, the window itself filled in with a gable of the old church and half a grave-stone.

Mr. Noel Stanton's room was a drawing, dining-room, and library to mine—Buckingham Palace to a shanty. A set of book-shelves filled with a variety of works of reference; a carpet and hearth-rug, paper-basket, two easy chairs, handsome fender and fire-irons, a leather-covered library table, and a

leather-covered seat to match: upon which seat and at which table sat Mr. Noel Stanton, looking up through his light, thin-rimmed spectacles at a newspaper which he held high up whilst he leaned back luxuriously, letting the scarlet tassel of his brilliant smoking-cap dangle over the back of that handsome leather seat. It was quite a picture, this room, with the editor in it, and until within the last few days it had never entered my conceited imagination to think for a moment that some day I might sit in as grand a room and with as much authority.

Mr. Noel Stanton was something more than editor of the *Herald;* he took a share of the reporting, when this feature of the local work predominated. This was a condescension on his part which was highly appreciated by Mr. Mitching, and was of importance to me. Upon this never-to-be-forgotten day it had been arranged that I should attend at the Guildhall and Mr. Noel Stanton at the Castle, where there was a special magisterial meeting.

"Well, how did the magistrates get on?" said Mr. Stanton, when I entered his room.

"I don't know. I had a narrow escape this morning of missing the Guildhall meeting," I replied.

"What Guildhall meeting?" said Mr. Stanton, laying down the *Times*, and looking at me in a haughty manner through his spectacles.

"The sanitary business," I reply, shortly.

"Hang the sanitary business! What did the *magistrates* do at the Castle?"

"I don't know. Have you not been there, Mr. Stanton?"

"I been there, sir; no, sir, I have 'not been there, Mr. Stanton.'"

"You were to have gone," I say as calmly as I can.

"Nothing of the kind. I was not to have gone, sir," he replies mockingly.

"I understood so," I say.

"Understood so! Humbug, sir—all humbug!"

He rises angrily from his seat, and repeats, "Humbug, sir!" all the time scowling at me through his spectacles.

I go for the diary which is kept in my room; I show him in his own handwriting, "Castle meeting, N. S.," "Guildhall, at 10, C. K." These are the arrangements for the day, duly initialed by himself.

"It's a lie, sir, a forgery," he says, getting very red in the face.

I think to myself he is not half a head taller than I am, and certainly no stronger. It flashes through my mind also that I had many a fight at Stoneyfield when I was a very little fellow.

"What do you mean, Mr. Stanton?" I ask indignantly.

"Mean! You are a conceited puppy and a liar, sir!"

Watch your opponent's eye occurs to me as one of the golden rules of pugilistic Stoneyfield; have a firm guard as another; and hit out well from the shoulder whenever there is an opening, as a third.

I plant my right foot well down, and get ready for a rapid guard, as I say, "And you are another, sir, if it comes to that!"

"Leave the room, you scoundrel!" screams Mr. Stanton, "or I'll pitch you out of the window."

He rushes toward me. I put up my right-hand guard, and stand as firm as a rock.

"Better take off your spectacles," I say coolly.

"You wretched cur!" he screams, acting on my suggestion at the same time.

"Pooh!" I say; "you are a greater ass than I took you for."

My temerity seems boundless. I don't care for forty thousand Stantons, or forty thousand *Heralds*, at that moment.

Again he rushes toward me. When he is within striking distance, his face being conveniently accessible, I let out with my right, well from the shoulder. He staggers, but recovers himself, and plunges at me again. I then release my left lightly, and down he goes with his head in the paper-basket.

I keep my eyes well upon him. He rises to his feet. I put up my left-hand guard, ready to exercise my right. Instead of coming on again, my opponent seizes a chair and throws it at me with all his might. Fortunately it only grazes my head, and goes smash into the bookshelves; but this unexpected onslaught flurries me a little, and I find myself on the floor, with the editorial fingers in my *neck-tie, and the* editorial lips uttering the most

murderous threats. I curl my legs round the dastard. We roll over and over. I feel myself getting the worst of this new phase of the battle. With a sudden exercise of all my strength, I get uppermost once more, and plant my knee upon his chest. His hold upon my throat relaxes. He tries to speak. I seize him firmly by the neck, and then let him say what he has to say.

"I give in, I give in! I cry you mercy," he gasps. I release him, and we both get up; he with serious marks of the conflict between his eyes—I, feeling a little sore about the throat, but otherwise unhurt.

Just as I am leaving the room he rushes at me from behind, seizes the tails of my new blue frock-coat, and tears them from one side to the other. When I turn round upon him, he confronts me with a pair of shears and a bleeding mouth; and I hear footsteps entering my room.

I shut the editorial door, seat myself at my own desk, and receive Mr. Mitching.

"Good-morning, Kenrick," says Mr. Mitching. "Is Mr. Stanton in his room?"

My reply was more in Mr. Stanton's interest than my own. It came out instantly, justifying the epithet which the editor had applied to me ten minutes before.

"No, sir; he has just stepped out."

I said this loudly, that Mr. Stanton might hear me, and remain quiet.

My reply was unjustifiable. I believe it was my

first lie; if not, it was certainly the first impudent, direct one I had ever told.

Mr. Mitching was satisfied. If he had gone into Mr. Stanton's room, I should have looked foolish indeed. It is a wonder to me that Mr. Stanton did not convict me on the spot. He used this incident against me on the next day.

"Will you come in and dine with us to-morrow, Mr. Kenrick? Mrs. Mitching will be pleased to see you. We shall dine immediately after church, Master Kenrick. As it is communion Sunday, we shall be out half an hour later than usual, as you are aware."

The pompous gentleman looked at me under his gold-rimmed glasses, pursed up his lips, said "I think we are beginning to appreciate you—eh, eh, Master K.?" and bade me good-morning; whereupon, Mr. Stanton hurried out—not to follow Mr. Mitching, but to seek an artist friend, as I afterward discovered, and get him to paint out certain blue marks about his eyes, certain marks of my proficiency in the science of defence, for which I was heartily sorry.

At the same time I cannot disguise from myself that I experienced something like pleasant sensations of victory. I had been assailed in a cowardly fashion. My opponent was a bigger and an older man; but I could have thrashed a couple of Stantons easily, if they had been equally ignorant of those few *leading rules of* the noble art of self-defence. I had

fought scores of boys at Stoneyfield, fought them upon the honorable rules of the ring; no kicking, no hitting when a fellow's down, and fair play generally.

Whilst Mr. Stanton went to his artist, I went home and changed my coat, and in the evening I entertained Tom Folgate and Fitzwalton with a full account of the battle.

I had to show them my guard. I had to exhibit how, when Stanton "came at me wild," I let drive with my right. It must have taken me hours to satisfy the curiosity of these two friends. Fitzwalton would be Stanton, and go through the whole thing like a play, rushing at me wild, as he said, and making me let out with my right. Then he would pretend to get up and throw the chair at me, and get me down and roll over, letting me kneel on his chest, Tom Folgate all the time laughing and holding his sides, and flourishing his hair-plume with intense delight. Fitzwalton would go through the whole fight, would cry, "I give in," "I am vanquished," and pretend to tear my coat; then he imitated the pompous arrival of old Mitching, and made me repeat what I had said to him. And, finally, he would sit down, and laugh, and vow it was the best thing he had ever heard of.

I was quite a hero on this Saturday night; but every now and then I felt very sorry for poor Mr. Stanton, who was sitting at home with his wounded face and his wounded pride. I pictured him sitting

there moodily, unhappy, and fretful, and wished I had not mentioned his humiliation to Folgate and Fitzwalton.

My fancy picture, however, did not do justice to Mr. Noel Stanton, who was busily preparing on this Saturday night a letter to Mr. Mitching, detailing my scoundrely conduct, and painting me in the character of a would-be assassin. On the next day, when I was sitting with the Mitchings at dessert, this letter arrived. Mr. Noel Stanton knew well enough when we should be comfortable and happy over our wine, and he timed the delivery of his letter accordingly.

Mr. Mitching opened it, fixed it through his gold-rimmed glasses, balanced them on his nose at it, scowled at it, coughed at it, and looked exceedingly surprised at it.

"What is the matter, George?" said Mrs. Mitching.

"I shall be sorry for you to know, my dear; you, above everybody."

"Dear me! Something dreadful!" said the lady, with a sarcastic smile.

"It is dreadful," said Mitching, looking at me.

"Give me the letter," said Mrs. Mitching.

"No, my dear, I would rather not! it is a serious charge against Mr. Kenrick."

The old gentleman laid down his glasses as he said this, and seemed to be preparing himself for the

delivery of an oration; but Mrs. Mitching cut down his aspirations very summarily.

"Don't be silly, George, and don't make a speech until I have seen what it is about."

The lady took the letter, read it, and deliberately said she did not believe it.

"Don't you, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Mitching. "Dear me!"

"No, I do not, dear me," said Mrs. Mitching, in a mocking voice. "And if it were true, the story might have kept until Monday."

"But Mr. Stanton heard Mr. Mitching invite me here to-day," I said, for I soon guessed what the letter was about.

"Then it is positively mean to send that note at this time," she said. "Never mind it now, Mr. Kenrick; it can rest until to-morrow. One story is good until another is told."

"Thank you, Mrs. Mitching: I was not in the wrong, I assure you."

"I quite believe you," she said; but Mr. Mitching looked grave, and said it was a very unfortunate occurrence.

And so it was to all appearance on the next day; for it compelled me to resign my engagement on the *Lindford Herald*. Mrs. Mitching was on my side, and begged me to stay; old Mitching himself thought Mr. Stanton might overlook the matter, and I believe he would have done so, but from the mo-

ment that Mitching said one of us must certainly resign, I resigned, and held to it. I told Esther it would be all for the best; I needed extended experience; I would work hard and seek a higher position than that which I held at Lindford.

Without a moment's delay I began to study the advertising columns of the *Times;* and the day came when I made a very unhappy discovery of a vacancy on the press in a seaport town, three hundred miles away from dear old Lindford city.

CHAPTER XIV.

FAMILY CRITICISM—A CHAPTER BY THE WAY, CHIEFLY ON SOME "SIGNS OF THE TIMES."

FOR some special reasons, best known to herself, my wife is particularly silent with regard to the latest instalment of these particulars of my life. Perhaps she is thinking about the engagement of our youngest daughter with Mr. Felton. Since I obtained for that gentleman the living at Hallow, to which he was appointed last month, our reverend friend is less attentive to Cissy. Mrs. Kenrick went so far as to suggest, the other day, that he intended to break off the match. I confess that I have noticed some slight change in Mr. Felton's manner; but this may be set down to increased spiritual and temporal responsibilities. Whilst I am thinking what might be the effect of any coolness on Mr. Felton's part toward Cissy, my two girls come into my study, and the following conversation ensues.

Bess. Well, father, and how do you like the family contribution to Christopher Kenrick?

Myself. I think the extra chapters are interesting. I hope they will not confuse the reader in his estimate of the general story.

Bess. Your audience, sir, can easily avoid that. The reader may skip these extra chapters.

Cissy. I should certainly skip them, if I were what pa calls an outsider.

Bess. It is a good thing to know how to skip judiciously. Some of Mudie's readers must be adepts in the art. That terrible "Woman in White," how much one skipped there to get at the engrossing secret!

Cissy. You should read "The Moonstone;" that is the best of Wilkie Collins's books, and you really need not skip much there. The characters are well drawn, and it is delightfully romantic to have those Indians coming upon the scene so mysteriously.

Myself. You did not skip "The Epicurean," I dare be bound, Bess, nor "Esmond," nor the stories in that volume of De Quincy, which I observed in your hand the other day.

Cissy. No, pa; I could read those without skipping. It is like having the nightmare to read De Quincy, for all that; but I skipped "Ivanhoe," which you praise so much, and "The Antiquary," and "Felix Holt."

Bess. Felix Holt is a bore—Adam Bede turned into a politician, and a Radical, too—insufferable, but a fine book, nevertheless; and "Romola" is a classic that will live for ages. I agree with Cissy about Scott: he gives you too much upholstery—leaves nothing to the imagination. His descriptions are inventories.

Myself. Who would be an author, even a great *author, if this* be the fate of the best and proudest,

to be torn piecemeal by a couple of chattering girls? And what do you say to our friend Christopher?

Bess. He is a very amusing young gentleman, and more especially, perhaps, now that he is fairly in love. I still prefer the actress to Miss Wilton.

Cissy. Oh, Bessie! A designing thing, evidently, Miss Belmont! The "megs" are great fun, I think. Fancy Miss Priscilla thinking Christopher wanted to see her. I have had a letter from Tom. He had no notion, pa, that you were so well up in the mysteries of the art of self-defence. Yesterday he was hunting with Lord Melville's hounds, and the *Bell's Life* chapter was discussed over dinner. Lord M. said it was a pity the story did not treat of a higher grade of society than that of newspaper fellows and actors.

Myself. Indeed! Lord Melville's grandfather was a soap-boiler; but go on, my child.

Cissy. That is all, papa.

[*Enter* MRS. KENRICK.]

Myself. I thought I heard a carriage drive up!

Mrs. Kenrick. Yes; your friend, Father Ellis, as you insist upon calling him (though there is no more strenuous opponent of the Romish Church), has called. He says he intends to spend the evening with you. Shall he come up?

Myself. By all means; and if he be conversationally inclined, he shall contribute to our extra chapters.

Mrs. Kenrick. I wish all your chapters were at an end, my dear.

Myself. Is that for publication, or only for the author's private ear?

Mrs. Kenrick. Don't be absurd, Christopher. Mr. Ellis is coming up without waiting for my reply.

[*Enter* MR. ELLIS, a gray-bearded pronounced parson. He has recently introduced the surplice into the choir of the adjoining parish, and fought an epistolary battle with an extreme Evangelical in the county paper. He tells me that he was determined to come up to my sanctum as soon as he learnt from the servant that only the young ladies were with me. He laughs merrily at his own temerity, shakes hands, sits down, and says he is come for a chat.]

Myself. We are rejoiced to see you, most reverend Father of the Faithful, I say. Your last letter in the *Advertiser*, on what you call the superstitious phase of your argument with your brother in the Church, was very well put. By the way, that was a shrewd remark of Doctor Johnson's, Parson,—"It is wonderful that five thousand years have now elapsed since the creation of the world, and still it is undecided whether there has ever been an instance of the spirit of any person appearing after death; all argument is against it, all belief for it."

Father Ellis. Equally shrewd the remark, that "Superstition is but the fear of belief, religion the *confidence.*"

Myself. No shop, Parson, no shop; no Irish Church; no attacks on Gladstone. Let us chat in peace. I could have given you some notes for your paper. I had been reading Seafield's collection of "Dreams," Home's "Incidents in My Life," Binns "On Sleep," and Symonds on the same subject. The result would have worked up well with your theological illustrations of superstition.

Bess. I suspect, Mr. Ellis, it was Mr. Kenrick who wrote that leader on your correspondence, the moral of which was the national decay of England.

Parson. Indeed, indeed! That was too bad of you, sir.

Cissy. I firmly believe in ghosts.

Myself. There is not a man whom you meet but in his quiet, graver moments will tell you of strange, unaccountable things that have happened to him, frankly disclosing to you that vein of superstition which runs through every mind. There seems to be a deep-seated love of the marvellous, a fear of darkness, in the composition of us all; it is as if the mind had some big secret of its own, and only now and then let us have a glimpse of it sufficient to excite our speculation and wonder. Yet we laugh at ghosts, and pity the men and women who believe in Spiritualism.

Parson. We may believe in spirits without crediting them with the humiliating practices of upsetting tables and chairs. Yet, friends of mine have seen some of these strange phenomena which, it is said,

attend Mr. Home. We live in extraordinary times. I am not going to preach, and I do not believe that the Good Father would let our spirits wander about the universe subject to the beck and call of Mr. Home or any other mortal; but it has occurred to me, often of late, that just prior to the coming of our Saviour, the spirit world was in a state of very great commotion: they that were *evil* more particularly gave evidence of continual agitation. May it not be that the second coming is at hand? for not in England alone do we hear of singular and strange manifestations. In that great continent of America, where the people are freed from the traditions of the past, the land is broken up into strange sects and peoples; and this is the centre of the fiercest of modern superstitions. Rely upon it, the great day is at hand.

Myself. Now, my dear Parson, you said you would not preach; and here you are in the midst of a sermon.

Parson. Satan shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth; and this will be a time of evil indeed, of wars and rumors of wars, and false prophets; armies shall war and destroy each other; another Gog and Magog shall arise, and come against the holy city; then shall come the end of all things by fire, and then the Millennium. "They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations," saith Isaiah—

Myself. I rise to order. Next Sunday I will be with you at church, and will listen to your biblical views of our manners and customs, and pay the greatest possible attention to your moral philosophy. For the present let us look a little into the lay element of the question. Moreover, I intend to print this conversation as a dialogue; so we must make it popular in the better sense of the term. Carlyle talks of superstition as the horrid incubus (now passing away without return), which dwelt in darkness, shunning the light, with all its racks and poison-chalices and foul sleeping-draughts. Now it seems to me, Parson, there is as much of this darkness of superstition about us now as ever there was in the past.

Parson. In all ages, amongst all peoples, there has existed a belief in spirits, witchcraft, dreams, charms, and other mysteries promoted by the Romish Church in the days of—

Myself. Parson, Parson, you are in the pulpit again. Let us have no Romish Church in this discussion. I say that the only difference between those older days of darkness and the present is, that we do not burn witches and pillory Spiritualists, because we don't believe in them, and for some time past we have pitied their dupes; but, now-a-days, so many intellectual people shake their heads and make confessions of "spiritual phenomena," that you are puzzled what to think or say about it. Is it that we are really "shooting Niagara" in down-

right earnest, or are we in the midst of a darkness which is simply the forerunner of a purer light—a better day?

Parson. St. John in his Revelations—

Myself. We know all about that, Parson. Cumming has done it. I am sure you don't want me to think you are a disciple of the modern prophet's.

Parson. I will be even with you next Sunday evening, *mon ami.* You *shall* hear what St. John says, and we will discuss false prophets, too.

Myself. If there were nothing worse than Spiritualism abroad, Parson, one would not feel so unhappy about the signs of the times. Strange beliefs, irreligion, weird conceits, luxurious living, an absence of female modesty, depraved and degraded tastes, marked the decline and fall of the classic cities. The blackest chapter in the history of modern manners and customs, it seems to me, will be that which relates to our women. The fashionable newspapers and those of a higher class, which go in for politics, literature, and satire, are full of stories of the degeneracy of our women. Aping the *demi-monde*, talking slang, turning dressing for society into undressing, reading the worst of the French novels, and discussing freely with men questions which are not for mixed debate, our young women, it would appear, have lost all that native modesty which was our moral strength, our glory, and our pride. In keeping with all this are the extravagant fashions, *to be dated from* that imitating of a certain skirt

introduced by the Empress of the French, and copied with disgusting extravagance by the British female. Our women have gradually degenerated since then, until, according to all accounts, they are drifting further and further away from all the good old ties and landmarks of modesty and virtue.

Parson. I don't believe it.

Mrs. Kenrick. Thank you, Mr. Ellis, nor do I.

Bess. Nor does father; he is only putting the case to develop his own thoughts about it.

Myself. The newspapers say all this is true.

Parson. It is simply sensational work. The "Girl of the Period" is a gross and wicked libel.

Myself. Perhaps so far as our country girls are concerned; but what about town?

Parson. Still a libel. That nonsense, the other day, about women wearing false ears. There was nothing in it. Our young ladies have been maligned as much as the parsons. Newspaper gossippers must earn their living: *multa docet fames.* The women are as good now as ever they were, and not a whit less beautiful—a little forward in their manners; but they only reflect the character of the age. Everything is fast now-a-days. Steam and electricity have worked their way into the national life. As for degeneracy, I see more declining and falling in those secret societies, trades-unions, and Fenianism, than in the alleged degeneracy of female modesty.

Myself. I congratulate the ladies upon so worthy a champion.

Parson. Infidelity is the great plague-spot of the times—infidelity and greed. The Church does not say enough to her people about these things. Our public men are not the outspoken honest fellows of the days of Pitt and Fox. The Golden Calf has willing worshippers in the highest quarters; and that old spirit of loyalty, that practical, earnest, thorough-going love of Fatherland, which was alive in the early days, is dying out. We have too much freedom, sir, considerably too much.

Myself. Too much abuse of it.

Parson. Too much of it, sir: look at the state of the labor market; look at our railways; look at our great companies; look at our public meetings. Free trade, sir, is the cause of the distress now apparent everywhere in the country.

Myself. Parson, Parson!

Parson. You will not let me preach, so you must permit me to prate. I say our liberties are too great. Working men have liberty to combine against the commercial interests of their country; liberty to intimidate, liberty to kill. Public men have liberty to spout treason, and newspapers liberty to print it. The foreigner has liberty to enter our ports, and undersell us; and liberty to buy our coals and other raw materials untaxed, to enable him to do so.

Myself. Once more I rise to order. We were

talking of superstition, and as it is the ghostly period of the year—

Cissy. Don't say that, papa.

Myself. Ghosts come in with Christmas, love.

Bess. Only in Magazines and Illustrated papers.

Parson. Free trade is superstition.

Myself. Parson, Parson! this is worse than a sermon. I insist upon returning to our original topic. The latest phase of so-called Spiritualism is the most startling of all. I think it is a Frenchman who has introduced it. He lays a sheet of paper and pencil upon a tombstone, walks away a short distance, returns, and finds upon the paper the signature of the person interred, written in the manner of the man as he lived.

Parson. A mountebank's trick, that is all. It is a surprising thing that these raisers of ghosts do not give them something useful to do. I believe in spirits, my friend; but this is not the work of spirits. Contemplate for one moment the doings of the spirits, as narrated in the only authentic record of spiritual work. The good Father of us all employs not immortal spirits in such labor as this. He would not even permit the damned to be tortured with such humiliations as the spiritualists invent for them.

Myself. Have you ever met Mr. Home, the chief of spiritualists? He who lost that Chancery suit, *involving thirty thousand* pounds?

Parson. I have; but he spiritualized not in my presence.

Bess. I thought he was a dreadful impostor until I saw him, and now I hardly know what to make of him.

Parson. Make of him! make fun of him, as *Punch* does.

Bess. That is not quite so easy, when you know him; but I think he is a madman.

Cissy. If you want to read a ghost story, Mr. Ellis, Home's "Incidents" is nothing but a ghost story from the beginning to the end.

Parson. I have a theory about this fellow. He is a mesmerist; he mesmerizes his sitters, and takes possession of their common sense.

Myself. I was curious enough the other day to search the Chancery files, and make the following abstract from this person's affidavit as an example of the spread of superstition in high quarters. Here it is. I intended to use it some day in an essay on hallucination. This is what Mr. Home says of himself. I am surprised the newspapers did not publish the narrative:—

"I was born in Scotland, on the 20th March, 1833, and from my earliest childhood I have been subject to the occasional happening of singular physical phenomena in my presence, which are most certainly not produced by me or by any other person in connection with me. I have no control over them whatever. They occur irregularly, and even when I am asleep. Sometimes I am *many months*, and once I have been a year without them. They *will not happen* when I wish; and my will has nothing to do

with them. I cannot account for them further than by supposing them to be effected by intelligent beings, or spirits. Similar phenomena occur to many other persons. In the United States of America, I believe about eleven millions of rational people, as well as a very great number in every country in Europe, believe as I do, that spiritual beings of every grade, good and bad, can, and do, at times, manifest their presence to us. I invariably caution people against being misled by any apparent communications from them. These phenomena occurring in my presence have been witnessed by thousands of intelligent and respectable persons, including men of business, science, and literature, under circumstances which would have rendered, even if I desired it, all trickery impossible. They have been witnessed repeatedly, and in their own private apartments—where any contrivance of mine must have been detected—by their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of the French, their Majesties the Emperor, Empress, and late Empress-Dowager of Russia, their Imperial Highnesses the Grand Duke and Duchess Constantine of Russia, and the members of their august family, their Majesties the King of Prussia, the late King of Bavaria, the present and late King of Wurtemburg, the Queen of Holland, and the members of the Royal family of Holland, and many of these august personages have honored, and I believe still honor me with their esteem and goodwill, as I have resided in some of their palaces as a gentleman, and their guest—not as a paid or professional person. They have had ample opportunities, which they have used, of investigating these phenomena, and of inquiring into my character. I have resided in America, England, France, Italy, Germany, and Russia, and in every country I have been received as a guest and friend by persons in the highest position in society, who were quite competent to discover and expose, as they ought to have done, anything like contrivance on my part to produce these phenomena. I do not seek, and never have sought, the acquaintance of these exalted personages. They have sought me, and I have thus had a certain notoriety thrust upon me. I do not take money, and never have taken it, although it has been repeatedly

offered me, for or in respect of these phenomena, or the communications which sometimes appear to be made by them. I am not in the habit of receiving those who are strangers to me, and I never force the subject of spiritualism on any one's attention. I trust that I am a sincere Christian. I conscientiously believe—as all the early Christians did—that man is continually surrounded and protected or tempted by good and evil spirits. I have, in my circle of friends, many who were not only infidels but atheists, until they became convinced by the study of these phenomena of the truths of immortality; and their lives have been greatly improved in consequence. Some of the phenomena in question are noble and elevated; others appear to be grotesque and undignified. For this I am not responsible any more than I am for the many grotesque and undignified things which are undoubtedly permitted to exist in the material world. I solemnly swear that I do not produce the phenomena aforesaid, or in any way whatever aid in producing them. In 1858, I married a Russian lady of noble family, who was a goddaughter of the late Emperor Nicholas, and educated by him. She died in 1862, and by her I have one son, christened 'Gregoire,' but alluded to in the conversations and letters, hereinafter set forth, by the pet name of 'Sacha.' The present Emperor of Russia has graciously consented to be his godfather, and the Grand Duchess Constantine his godmother, on the occasion of his being baptized into the Greek Church, which is to take place."

What do you think of that, sir?

Parson. Human credulity is boundless, and wisdom is not always to be found beneath the diadem. Our forefathers would have settled the whole business by burning Home and his book.

Myself. That is the very thing he says himself; but he gives us some curious facts which bear upon *the character of* his own professed power. In 1841,

Dr. Reid Clanny, a physician of Sunderland, published an authoritative report of the remarkable illness of one Mary Jobson, a girl of thirteen. Strange knockings frequently took place near her bed, and strains of music were heard, as is said to be the case with Mr. Home. A voice was also heard in the room, and sometimes this voice whispered to people in other houses, bidding them go and see the patient. This voice told the doctor on one occasion that Mary's own spirit had fled, and a new one had taken possession of her body; all this time the child being bed-ridden. At length Mary Jobson was suddenly raised from her extreme illness. The voice which had promised a miraculous cure, told the attendants to lay out the girl's clothes and leave the room, all but an infant of two years old. After a quarter of an hour's absence, the voice called to them, "Come in;" and when they entered, they found Mary sitting up, dressed, and perfectly well, with the infant upon her knee. In 1732, the London newspapers contained accounts of a girl being haunted by a spirit which replied to her by knocks, and at Shepton Mallet, in 1657, a woman was executed for having, as it was supposed, bewitched a youth, who every now and then was lifted into the air by some unseen power. As for knockings, scores of country people will tell you of noises heard before death, distinct knocks, which Mr. Home tells us are spiritual communications.

Parson. Luther thought he heard the devil crack-

ing nuts in his chamber at Wurtzburg. [A long exclamation of "Oh! Mr. Ellis," from Cissy.]

Myself. Which has not escaped Mr. Home, who must certainly be credited with some ability in fighting his side of the spiritualistic question.

Parson. The spiritualists make a great point of their visions, do they not?

Myself. Home professes to see visions, converse with spirits, and, according to their own testimony, this is a common thing with believers.

[Mrs. Kenrick begs we will excuse Cissy and herself, and thus the talkers are reduced to three.]

Parson. And do we not all see visions?—do we not all converse with spirits in dreamland? but it is so rare a thing for the Divine Majesty to reveal himself to His children in dreams, that the habit of interpretation has gone out; and moreover, God having already given us all that is necessary for our salvation, we have no need of dreams and visions to guide and assist us. The inspired dreamers of the Bible,—look at the nature and character and importance of their dreams. What a sublimity, what a breadth, what a grandeur of symbolism there was in those visions! The spirits of the Bible record knocked upon no tables, my friend, tilted no sofas, played upon no banjos. Bah!

Myself. And yet, Parson, just now you seemed half inclined to believe in spirits.

Parson. Yes, as Milton believed—

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night. How often from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to other's note,
Singing their great Creator! Oft in bands,
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds
In full harmonic numbers joined, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our souls to heaven."

Myself. A good motto for the Spiritualist's book! He must have missed this most appropriate quotation, or surely he would have used it.

Parson. Unfortunately, Home's music and spiritual doings lift our thoughts not to heaven, but to Home.

Myself. Many men have predicted their own deaths through dreams and tokens.

Parson. Death has often signified its approach to persons through some subtle instinct, perhaps excited by the gradual decay of the body, and thus communicated to the brain. There are many instances of the extraordinary fulfilment of dreams. In the early days of Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, he was travelling to Padua. At Dover he showed his pass, and the governor would not let him go by the packet-boat; he took him prisoner, in fact. "Why do you detain me?" asked *Harvey.* "It is my will," said the governor.

The vessel sailed, and was wrecked, all hands perishing. The governor then told Harvey that he saw him in a dream the night before, and had a warning to stop him. But what is there remarkable in this? God has his own way of using his instruments. Harvey had a mission to fulfil, and Heaven saved him for it. Surely we do not pray to God to help and watch over us, and then doubt His power and His will to do so.

Myself. Yet you said just now the Almighty had ceased to interfere specially, by the means of visions, in the government of the world.

Parson. Did I? Then I meant it not; for have we not scores of verified instances where He has put justice on the track of crime in dreams? Look at the case of the robbery and murder of Stockden, in 1698, discovered and avenged through the dreams of a neighbor; and Maria Martin in the Red Barn, for that matter.

Myself. Then you believe in Swedenborg's visions?

Parson. I said not that. Swedenborg was mad.

Myself. Yet some persons have dreams that come true.

Parson. Insanity is a continual dream.

Myself. But dreaming is not insanity.

Parson. Certainly not; often quite the reverse. Condillac, the metaphysician, completed important speculations in his sleep. Franklin thought out matters of moment in his dreams, until he regarded his dreams with a certain superstitious awe. These

great and active intellects were simply at work whilst the body rested.

Myself. But what about the so-called waking or magnetic sleep in which the modern seers have revelations? What about those wide domains of clairvoyance, mesmerism, second-sight, electro-biology, of which we hear so much in these modern days?

Parson. Ah! there we enter upon a wide sea of speculation, and are getting out of our depth, friend.

Myself. Whither we have been drifting for some time past, most grave and reverend father; and lest we founder, I cry back to *terra firma* again, and propose that we leave the world to take its own course: it is clear there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in our philosophy.

Parson. And methinks, friend Kenrick, we have but weakly pondered by the shore of the great sea which lies before us with ten thousand wonders awaiting the scrutinizing eye of the bold and faithful and God-fearing discoverer; but even to the best, and bravest, and purest, and most Christian-like, the famous maxim of Horace will nevertheless apply—"*Nec scire fas est omnia.*"

[When Father Ellis had said good-night, Bessie pronounced our conversation interesting and intellectual.]

Myself. I fear it may bore our Kenrick friends.

Bess. Not at all, father; print it; you should at least have one heavy chapter in the extra pages.

Myself. I wish our friend Mr. Felton were as

lively a neighbor as Father Ellis, Bess. I fear your mother is uneasy about him.

Bess. I think mamma took Cissy away for the purpose of talking to her about Mr. Felton. His manner latterly has certainly been somewhat patronizing.

Myself. Nonsense, my love; that cannot be. He knows that it was I who procured Hallow for him.

Bess. Everybody knows it!

We retire after this, and at bedtime Mrs. Kenrick is full of strange notions about Mr. Felton. Cissy has been weeping. Mrs. K.'s trouble, and our daughter's grief, carry me back to my own early days, and I remember the pangs that I suffered in Harbourford and elsewhere. With a doubting hand, upon the next day, I prepare this extra-preliminary chapter, and leave poor Cissy and Mrs. Kenrick to talk over their mutual suspicions and anxieties, whilst I continue to build up this veracious record of my own course of love and adventure.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH I CONTINUE TO STUDY THE "TIMES."

THE autumn was coming on. The ivy flapped limply against the walls of the old church that filled up the little window of my office. The wind went soughing up the narrow lane, carrying stray leaves away to the river. The cathedral bells fell flat and heavily on the ear. The damp atmosphere seemed to get into your clothes and down your throat. Mr. Noel Stanton passed solemnly into his room without a word. Old Mitching balanced his glasses at me in a melancholy, sympathetic fashion. Only the printers, and Mrs. Mitching, when I saw them, looked smilingly at me. I had evidently risen in the estimation of one and the other. If I had wished it, Mrs. Mitching's influence would have kept me there in preference to Mr. Noel Stanton; but I was proud and ambitious, and it seemed brave to sacrifice myself.

Another influence at work was my desire to get those several hundred pounds, which Tom Folgate said were necessary before a young fellow could marry and settle down. There were larger and more important cities than Lindford, larger and more important papers than the *Lindford Herald*.

I would hardly have admitted this much to myself two years before; but "use doth breed a habit in a man." Familiarity with those great glass windows bred in me so much use to them that they began to appear small. The splendidly-bound books that I had gazed at in those early days of exile, lost their old smell; Mr. Mitching was not so magnificent a personage in my eyes; his wife was a little less charming than heretofore; and his sublime, his wonderful editor, had I not beaten him in a physical encounter?

Lindford, too, was growing less in my eyes, and it grew less and less and less the more I waded through those long columns of "Wanteds" in the *Times*. What a great, wide world it indicated, this big, crowded sheet! What hundreds of vacancies for clever, industrious people! I could not help feeling sorry every now and then that I was not a capitalist. What partnerships I might have entered into if I had had a few hundred pounds—partnerships that would have brought me in, every year of my life, more than enough to have made a happy, luxurious home for Esther Wilton! Indeed, I could have made enough money for a long time by lending, to struggling tradesmen and others, small sums for short periods. There were scores who would rejoice to pay double the sum lent, in return for fifty or a hundred pounds, to meet pressing engagements. I suppose these persons, however, speedily got assistance. *What a* wonderful world it seemed to me

from this careful study of the *Times*' sheet! Two hundred pounds a year for five shillings, one man offered. It almost took my breath away. I marked the advertisement with red ink, to show Tom Folgate. Another person offered two pounds a week on commission to travelling agents. Surely I had only to pick and choose here, and select what my income should be. My common-sense, however, every now and then knocked down the suddenly constructed castles that Hope would raise out of these advertising materials; but "it never yet did hurt," Shakspeare says, "to lay down likelihoods, and forms of hope." How many hopeful, exciting hours I passed on that high stool in the Lindford newspaper office!

Oh, that sheet of the *Times*, how I read it through and through, and wondered about the people who published day by day those strange and romantic advertisements! I tried to think what had become of those people who were missing; and my liveliest interest was excited in those who had left their homes, and whose return was so earnestly implored. They did not advertise for me when I ran away; they did not publish to all the world that "C. K. would be forgiven, if he would come back to his sorrowing parents." In good truth, when C. K. had repented, and wanted to be friends again, and wrote long letters to Stoneyfield, he received as little attention as Clarissa Harlowe got from her dreadful home. Once my father had said he would call and see me;

but his promise had not been fulfilled. I could not help thinking of these things in presence of that second column of the *Times*. And then my eyes would wander to the advertisements of ships about to sail for foreign lands.

> "Like ships that sailed for sunny isles,
> But never came to shore."

Would that be the fate of my hopes and dreams? I was about to sail for sunny isles. "Like that proud, insulting ship, which Cæsar and his fortune bare at once," I was outward bound for aggrandizement. I had anchored here in Lindford in a long and happy calm; but my days were numbered here —my bark must to sea once more. Would it go down in some terrible tempest, or reach those sunny isles of which I dreamed so often?

Treacherous, tempting *Times!* I wandered through thy offers of wealth and fame for many days; and at last bound myself to Carnaby Muddle, Esq., of Harbourford, to do his behests in the capacity of reporter-in-chief of the *Harbourford Messenger*. Why did I not select some other prize from the hundreds which were within my grasp every day? How should I know that in changing from the joint sovereignty of Mitching and Stanton, I should be "like to a ship that having 'scaped a tempest, is straightway calmed and boarded by a tyrant?"

How Esther and I talked of this distant land, this

Harbourford, three hundred miles away from dear old Lindford! I looked it out upon the map, and hunted up all its history through encyclopædias. I told Esther about its docks, its assembly-rooms, its shipping, its theatre, and everything I could think of. I showed her a copy of the *Messenger* which Mr. Muddle had sent me, and told her by what post to expect it every week, marked with my work, every paragraph and report ticked off with my own pen. One night in particular I remember being especially eloquent and earnest in my arrangements with her, for the regulation of her conduct and my own, during the time that we were to be parted.

"Now that we are engaged, Esther, you must be more courageous in taking your own part."

"Yes, dear," Esther replied in her soft, mild, trusting voice.

"Barbara and Priscilla must not be allowed to order you to do this and do that, like the centurion whom they preached about at the cathedral last Sunday. You are not a soldier to be commanded, nor a servant to be charged, 'Do this, and he doeth it.'"

"No," said Esther, quietly.

"I must talk to your mother, before I go away, about it; she ought not to permit it."

"Mamma does not like to make a disturbance. It is all for the sake of peace and quietness."

"Yes, my dear, that is the way of the world; there are always people ready to walk upon those who prostrate themselves."

"It will not be for long," Esther says. "You will soon come and take me away, will you not?"

"That I will, my darling," I reply, with sudden visions of happiness floating before me.

"Emmy is to be married soon," she continues. "Tom and Emmy have been talking about how they will furnish their house."

"Yes, dear, and how?"

"Emmy says she shall have a beautiful drawing-room, with all sorts of delicate things in it; and the finest water-color paintings, real lace curtains, and a piano from Broadwoods'."

"Does Tom say so?"

"Mr. Folgate says she shall furnish just as she likes; and Emmy is always talking of her arrangements; it is quite delightful to hear her. She is going to have statuary all the way up the grand staircase, and a little black foot-boy or page."

"Is that what you would like, Esther?" I say, with a touch of despair in my heart.

"I should like what you would like, Chris," Esther replies, looking up into my face.

"I should like to give you all the wealth of the world, Esther. The home that Claude Melnotte described in the play last year, is nothing to the home which I would give you, Esther; but I fear my house will be but a poor Melnotte's cottage, after all."

Esther pressed my arm. She did not speak, and for a moment I feared the gaudy picture pleased her most.

"Could you be content with a husband who loved you dearly, were he poorer even than that poor gardener's son?"

"If that husband were you, yes," said Esther, promptly. "I do not care for grandeur."

"A nice little house, Esther," I go on, "with a neat kitchen, and a pleasant parlor, and a servant to scrub the floors, and sweep up the hearth, eh? Would that do?"

"Oh, Chris, don't talk to me as if the sort of house I am to live in will influence my love for you. When the time comes, take me where you will, I am yours forever."

"My dear girl!" I exclaimed, embracing her. "Spoken like a true and noble woman: we two shall find a home some day, Esther. If there be no grand staircases and statuary and servants in it, there will be two loving hearts, and without these, all the treasures of Peru will not make a happy home."

How well I remember those happy, loving, tender conversations by that old river in the Lindford meadows! How fresh and life-like that girl in the lama frock, growing into the dignity and grace of early womanhood, comes up in my memory! What a young, confiding, trusting pair we were! Am I that hopeful, bright-eyed young fellow, or have I mixed up in my mind some dream of Paul and Virginia with those early days at Lindford.

Emmy Wilton crops up in my mind to verify the

reality of the picture. It is a pretty, graceful figure; but there is something lurking behind in that black, deep-set eye, something in the curl of those red lips that veil a row of small white teeth, which is not easy of interpretation. Then that knowing toss of the head, and that little ringing artificial laugh. She was a schemer, this Emmy Wilton, a clever, designing, arch young woman, with a kind, affectionate nature, spoiled by the dictation of Barbara and Priscilla, and the weak maudlin indifference of a silly mother.

"I have always been fighting my sisters," she said to me, when I opened a conversation with her a day or two after I had urged Esther to resent their dictation, "always, except when I have been fighting my brother."

"Esther and you have always agreed," I said.

"Yes; only a brute could quarrel with her, and I'm not a brute," Emmy replied, sharply.

"Do you think I am?"

"No."

"Then why do you try to influence Esther against me?"

"Do I try?"

"Yes."

"How do you know? Does Esther tell you?"

"No; but you think I am not what you call a good match."

"Do you think you are a good match, then?"

"I love your sister with all my heart."

"And to show it, you propose to keep her and yourself on a hundred and fifty a year, or something of that sort, when she might marry, if she liked, a gentleman who could settle two thousand a year upon her."

"But she does not love that person."

"She would have done so if she had not seen you."

"Indeed! And this is your notion of love and marriage."

"My notion!" said Emmy, tossing back a cluster of thick, black curls that crowded over her forehead. "What is yours?"

I could feel that my poetic ideas of marriage would stand a good chance of being laughed at here, so I merely said:

"This is not your natural self, Miss Wilton; I am sure you are above the common, grovelling idea that people should marry for money."

"I don't think a man has any right to marry if he cannot afford to keep a wife."

"And you don't think I can afford it?"

"I am sure you cannot," she replied, with a little hollow laugh.

"If I wait until I can," I said, mortified at her coolness, "you will in the mean time not tamper with Esther's feelings toward me?"

"If my sister has made up her mind to marry you, nobody will shake her much. She is quiet and undemonstrative; but she has a will of her own."

"That is an evasion."

"I shall make no promises. For my part, if I were Esther, I should demand a full explanation from you concerning your familiarities with Miss Birt; but more especially with Mademoiselle the actress, Miss Julia Belmont."

"Esther knows all about my acquaintance with those ladies," I said, "and is quite assured of the sincerity of my love for her."

"Well, if she is satisfied, I suppose I ought to be. I know more of the world, Mr. Kenrick, than she does, if I am but six years older. We have both had rather a hard life, though nobody thinks it."

"I have noticed that there is not as much consideration for you at home as there should be."

"You are quite right, sir. We are children of a second husband, whose money has gone to pamper the first family, our elder sisters and brother. They sent me away from home when I was sixteen to be nursery-governess in Lady Snowdown's family; my father was his lordship's architect. They sent me alone all the way to London, unprotected, and without a single introduction. Lady Snowdown was a disgrace to her sex. She drank like a common drab; and one day I insisted upon coming home. Ever since then, I have had a bitter fight with these two elder ones. I claim as much right to be here as they, and I stay at home because I will, to spite them."

Emmy's eyes flashed, as she said this; and she threw back her curls defiantly.

"I admire your courage," I said, warmly, "as I have always admired your firmness of character, and loved you, if I may say so, for your kindness to your younger sister."

I took her hand here, and kissed it. My earnestness seemed to have made a good impression upon her.

"You think me a wretched, miserable girl," she said, in a softer manner.

"No, no," I hurriedly replied.

"Well, then, you have thought me so. You think I stand in the way of your love for Esther. My only thought is for her happiness, for her welfare. Those two persons, who call themselves my sisters, hate her worse than they hate me, because she is pretty and people say so. If anything happened to my poor, weak mother, they would drive her out into the world. They would do so now, were it not for me. A month ago, Priscilla obtained her an engagement to wait in a refreshment-room."

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "You do not say so?"

"I do."

"May the Lord punish Priscilla Wilton for her vile conduct!"

"The Lord seems to let things take their course pretty much as they like," said Emmy, bitterly. "If I have encouraged for Esther the attentions of a rich man, you see my reasons: it would give me joy, beyond imagination, to see her riding over *them in a brougham* and pair!"

"Would it not give you more real satisfaction to see her married to an honest, hard-working fellow, whose only wish and object in life should be to minister to her happiness?" I said, passionately.

"Perhaps, perhaps!" said Emmy, in reply. "What do you think Barbara did, when Esther was seven years old?"

"I cannot guess."

"She took her into a room, locked the door, and cut off all her hair, out of jealous spite. That was the only time my poor dead father struck any member of his family. As soon as it was reported to him, he beat Barbara with a horsewhip until she yelled. She was almost a woman, then; and I saw her punishment, poor little Esther standing by, crying bitterly, with all her pretty hair in her pinafore."

"You amaze me!"

"I tell you these things that you may understand what a family you seek to be connected with, but more particularly that you may understand why I have used a little influence against you. I shall do so no more. You are brave and honest; make haste and try to be rich." Emmy took my hand, as if it was the close of a bargain, and said, "We shall be friends in future," with an air that seemed to say, We shall understand each other.

When I told Tom Folgate, afterward, that I had had a long conversation with her, he seemed disturbed.

"I don't know what the devil to think of Emmy," Tom said, thrusting his big hands into his pockets, and striding across the room. "One day she says one thing, another day another."

"She is a fine, noble-spirited young lady," I said: "perhaps a little worldly; but she has lived in an exceptional school."

"By the way, Kenny," said Tom, "Mrs. Mitching has been asking me to use my influence with you to stay in Lindford."

"That is very kind on Mrs. Mitching's part, Tom; but my mind is made up. I have a big battle to fight. My soul's in arms and eager for the fray."

"Well, all right, my boy; you are the best judge of your own actions."

"I am going to earn money enough to marry Esther; and, Tom, I want you, in my absence, to be her guardian and protector. Will you?"

"Yes, lad, if she needs one; but I'm hardly the sort of fellow to have any authority over one so pretty and so young. Emmy is her best guardian angel; but rely on this, Kenny, if I can do anything for you, my boy—"

"You can do that, Tom. Take care of my Esther."

"I will. Shall Emmy and I take her with us to Russia, if we go?"

"I don't understand you."

"I've had an offer to take the management of some engine works in Russia, only this very day.

The proper thing to do would be to marry Emmy, and be off," said Tom, musing, as if he were talking to himself rather than to me.

"To Russia?" I said.

"Yes; a capital appointment. Why, Kenny, you had better come along; they will be sure to want an English correspondent. What a happy family we should make!"

Upon the question of Tom's earnestness in making this attractive suggestion, I cannot even satisfy myself now. If it was a mere playful fancy, it was cruel to conjure up the thought of so much happiness without an idea of realizing it. Supposing he threw out the hint in downright earnestness, how much he and others may have lost in hopes unfulfilled and bliss never consummated, it is painful to think of. In the evening of that day, when Tom and I went over to the Wiltons, and had a general sort of chat—a conversational cross-firing with Emmy and Esther—this plan was the subject of much lively and happy comment. Esther and I were quite ready, as we always had been, to take a humble place in life beside Tom and Emmy. We were to visit them, and ride out with them, and be always welcome at their house. They were to come and encourage us in our grand endeavor to make home happy on two hundred a year.

Castles in Spain! What magnificent palaces Esther and I built for noble Tom Folgate and *clever Emmy Wilton*! What snug, quiet, cozy, un-

pretending, birdcage-like cots we made for ourselves! Happy days, billing and cooing and thinking of making your nests; happy, happy days of early love. Thou singest truly, poet of the golden lyre—

> "There's nothing half so sweet in life
> As love's young dream."

CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER PARTING.

"WELL, sir, I must honestly confess," said Mr. Mitching, planting firmly forward his right foot, and placing his right hand within the breast of his ample vest, "indeed, I should be untrue to myself and to humanity did I not unreservedly say that I am sorry you are going to take your departure. I suppose it is quite three years since you first entered this establishment, an interesting but wayward youth, rebelling against parental authority. Don't interrupt me, sir, if you please, it is not often that I trouble you with any lengthened remarks."

How I wished that Mrs. Mitching had been there!

"It is, I say, quite three years ago since you were first engaged upon the *Lindford Herald*, and I am bound to say, that you have borne out the good opinion which Mrs. Mitching, in her great wisdom, then formed of your abilities; but it would be wrong if I did not admit that it often occurred to me that a boy who would violently throw off the legitimate rule of paternal government would be most likely to rebel against a less authorized power."

"But, Mr. Mitching—"

"*Permit me*, sir, to finish what I have to say,"

went on the irrepressible proprietor, in his pompous voice, and pointing at me with his gold-rimmed glasses. "You left your home because you were not properly appreciated, you quit this establishment because you could not brook the just control of your superior officer, and if you had been in the army, sir, you would have been degraded to the ranks for striking one who held a superior commission; indeed, I am not quite certain whether it would not have been a question of capital punishment. Do not be impatient, Mr. Kenny, I am only addressing you for your own benefit, and I—"

My pompous gentleman was interrupted at this point by a voice which said somewhat authoritatively, "George! George!"

The effect was magical. In a moment, Mr. Mitching assumed a soft, conciliatory manner, unplanted his right leg, took his hand out of his waistcoat, dropped the gold-rimmers, and said, sweetly, "Yes, my love."

"I want you," said the voice from an inner room.

"Certainly, my dear," and the gentleman disappeared, saying tenderly, as he went, "Be good enough to wait a moment, Mr. Kenrick."

Mr. Mitching's assistant smiled at me significantly, and I duly acknowledged its meaning. Mitching was grand in his shop; talked loud and strutted. He made speeches at the Town Council, and looked magnificently condescending in the street. But at Mrs. Mitching's feet he laid down all his sovereignty,

changed his voice to a sweet falsetto, and purred like a cat with buttered feet. He loved this woman, nevertheless,—loved her as fond old men mostly love pretty young lively girls. He had never hoped to win this wayward beauty for his wife, but the lady had thought Mitching a good match, seeing that all the young men had only cared to flirt with her; and Mitching was eternally grateful.

"Will you step into the house, Mr. Kenrick," said Mitching, when he returned. "Mrs. Mitching wishes to say good-bye to you."

I acted upon this command at once. Mrs. Mitching, in a white morning-dress, daintily trimmed, met me as I entered, and shook my hand warmly. She looked very charming—her teeth were so white and her smile was so sweet.

"And you are really going to leave us?"

She put her soft, white hand upon my shoulder, and I cannot resist that old feeling of wonder, How came this pretty woman to marry old Mitching?

"Yes, Mrs. Mitching," I reply.

"I am very sorry, Christopher. How does Mr. Folgate take it?"

"He is sorry," I reply; "and so am I."

"You like Mr. Folgate?" she says, motioning me to a seat beside her.

"I do, indeed," I reply.

"He is a dear good creature," she says. "Does he see much of that person—Miss Wilton?"

"Yes, they are to be married soon," I reply.

"Indeed!" she says, and I notice the color rush into her cheeks. "Do you think he loves the girl?"

"I think so," I say, marvelling at these questions.

"You think so, Kenny," she says; "do you only think so? Have you any reason to doubt it?"

"Oh, no," I say; at which she seems disappointed.

"I suppose you do not think he loves her as warmly as you love her sister. There, there, you need not blush; I know all about it."

I smile with as much show of indifference as I can, and say, "I suppose there are different degrees of love."

"Ah, it is a very, very dangerous, dreadful thing, Kenny," she replies. "Be wary of it."

I made no reply. The situation is most embarrassing. The lady seeing this, takes my hand again, and says:

"Well, Mr. Kenrick, I wish you all the success and happiness in life which you deserve. Good-bye! If there is anything which Mr. Mitching can do for you, write to me, and he shall do it."

I kissed her hand, she smiled in her own fascinating way, and I left her, feeling like one who had escaped from a pleasant kind of witchcraft. Mrs. Mitching was one of those women who would marry a man against his will, if she set her mind upon it. She was a fascinating, insinuating, soft-handed creature; but there was a lurking devil in her eye which could play *strange* autocratic pranks.

When I returned to that glassy shop of gorgeous books and show of engravings, Mr. Mitching was happily engaged with a county lady who was giving herself county airs. Mitching could only say, in a patronizing way, "Good-bye, sir, good-bye;" and I was not destined to hear him speak like himself again. He came to terrible grief in after years. I pity him now, when I think of the great blow that fell upon his house.

I had an early dinner at the Wiltons'. My train was to start at four in the afternoon. But there was another at six in the evening, by which I could also travel, and reach Harbourford the next day. When dinner was over (they dined at two, the Wiltons) I was permitted to have Esther all to myself. This was conceded through an appeal from Tom. Emmy, Priscilla, and Barbara went out to tea. Mrs. Wilton went up-stairs to lie down. Tom Folgate had undertaken to go with me to the station at four o'clock. Emmy took charge of the house. Esther and I were alone in the drawing-room.

I little thought I was plunging into a sea of trouble. My parting from Stoneyfield on that misty autumn morning was not more bitter than this separation from Esther. Strange that it should be so, you say. I hated Stoneyfield; I loved Lindford; that is, I loved Esther Wilton. When I ran away from Stoneyfield, I felt that I ought to have loved that place; that I ought to have been happy *in it; that* I had been treated harshly: and yet

when I saw it slipping away, stone by stone, brick by brick, house by house, I wept, and said "Good-bye" to it. And there was not more pain in my heart than there was now, even with Esther Wilton's head upon my shoulder; for did I not feel her hot tears upon my hand, and how could I tell what other causes might bring them into her eyes when I was far away, and there was no one left to comfort her? And was I not poor, and friendless, and homeless, a waif as it were on the great waves of the stormy world? I had only five pounds in my pocket, and two of those would go in railway fares. It might be years and years before I could amass two hundred pounds. Oh, if I could have taken Esther with me!

"'Tis a question left us yet to prove, whether love leads fortune, or else fortune love." What influence the one or the other had on my career, the sequel will show. Love is an all-engrossing passion, and affects different minds in a different manner. Esther could only cling and hope, and say sweet, tender things, and nestle to my side. I was full of valiant vows, full of the protector, the champion, desiring to cherish and comfort and console. But how bitter the thought that I, with all my love, could not even give my darling a little cottage like one of those working-men's cottages by the river, whilst that fellow, Howard, could have conducted her in state to a palace!

How these contending thoughts tore my heart in

those days, it boots not now to say. Tom Folgate sent a message that if I did not come in ten minutes I should lose the train. I replied that I had made up my mind not to go until six, but my luggage might be sent on. Esther looked all sunshine at this. I waved my hand defiantly at the ticking clock pointing fiercely to four; but the little monster had the better of us by and by, when I could no longer gainsay its peremptory marking of the time.

It was a sad parting, somehow, despite the efforts of both to appear cheerful and hopeful. I left the house in a heavy shower of rain, that came down remorselessly. They were just lighting the lamps, and the town looked lonely and cheerless. The flickering lights shone upon the reeking pavements. The cab in which I and Tom Folgate were seated smelt damp and fusty. At the railway station we found Fitzwalton, who insisted upon being jolly. The first thing he did was to square up at me in pugilistic fashion, and then, covering his face and looking terribly frightened, cry out, "I give in." He said as I had not been up to Bromfield Road, he had come down here (Tom Folgate having let him know by what train I started), to say good-bye for self, and wife, and sister, and to wish me all kinds of good wishes.

This was very kind of Fitzwalton, I thought; and I shook his hand warmly. I felt very much depressed, nevertheless. Tom Folgate, instead of trying to lighten our parting, was as doleful, and heavy,

and lugubrious in his remarks as he possibly could be. The rain splashed upon the railway track as we stood talking on the platform. A few oil-coated and wet passengers jostled us now and then, and at length I found myself watching the retreating forms of Tom and Fitzwalton, amidst a jumble of porters and luggage and steam. Then in a few minutes the city and its many flickering lights slipped away too, and I was blundering onward in the autumn darkness, that typified, alas! my own prospects, and the future that was just breaking in upon several persons that figure prominently in this history.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS.

TURNING over sundry papers relating to this early period of my life, I come across some original letters, and copies of letters, which will tell the story of my engagement at Harbourford perhaps better than I could narrate it. It is a faded-looking bundle, which I untie and examine. A crumpled rose falls upon the floor in a little cluster of leaves that still give forth a sweet perfume, the perfume of a long past summer, bringing back vivid memories of a strange, wayward life.

The following selections from these epistolary treasures will be sufficient to introduce the reader to the new phase in my life and adventures which that parting at Lindford inaugurated:

CHRISTOPHER KENRICK TO TOM FOLGATE.

Harbourford, October 10th, 18—.

MY DEAR TOM—It is quite certain that I have made a mistake in coming to this town. The *Harbourford Messenger* office is a very extraordinary place. You enter it up a narrow court. The first room you come to is the editor's room; and it is my *room also.* I have to sit in presence of a deaf,

gouty, old gentleman, who occupies his time between a pair of scissors and a paste-pot, except when he is instructing me in what manner to report this or that speaker. Mr. Carnaby Muddle, the proprietor, is a retired shoemaker, who tests the value of my work in the *Messenger* with a yard measure. Yes, dear Tom, he measures it, and if my reports and paragraphs are shorter than those of the opposition journal, the *Pilot*, Mr. Muddle complains to the editor, who rebukes Christopher Kenrick.

To your somewhat critical mind, my friend, the attempt at a leading article, occasionally, must seem melancholy, especially after the work of that much maligned but able writer, Mr. Noel Stanton. The press is debased, and journalism rendered ridiculous by the *Harbourford Messenger;* and you must not be surprised if you hear that I have left the place. You will give me credit, I am sure, for sincerity in my views about the high mission of the press. You cannot imagine to what base uses we of the *Messenger* are compelled to apply our talents. You would be sorry to see me sitting in a wretched little room (I verily believe it covers some foul sewer), with no furniture but a table and two chairs. It is entered by two doors, and one leads up a long, dark staircase to the printer's rooms, which are filled with a combined odor of printer's ink, tobacco-smoke, and a nameless smell that attaches to all unswept and unwashed rooms. Great spiders lie in wait for you as you ascend to this wretched region, and leave

traces of their mediæval webs upon your face and hat. Perhaps it may turn out to be good experience my coming here; but it requires all my philosophy to enable me to regard it in this light. If ever I write a novel, I will sketch the *Harbourford Messenger*.

You are not, dear Tom, to speak of this miserable picture to my darling girl, who writes to me so cheerfully, and with such happy hope in the future. I am, my dear friend, always thine,

CHRISTOPHER KENRICK

TOM FOLGATE TO CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

Lindford, October 15th, 18—.

MY DEAR BOY—What a hole! Confound it; send it to the devil. Be plucky, Kenny, and cut it. Yet stay! after all, one hole is as good as another. Lindford, if it be cleaner and more respectable than Harbourford seems to be, is a disgusting hole, and especially now thou art no longer here. Do not be downhearted. I wish we could have carried that scheme of ours out about going to Russia. It is on the cards for me to go; but Emmy wants to make all sorts of conditions.

Thy pretty little sweetheart looks as charming as ever. I met that Howard at Fitzwalton's the other night. Miss Amelia was trying on her fascinations with him; but it was no go. He is deuced rich, Kenny, my boy; but I think Esther is above riches. Noel Stanton is going in for Miss Birt, and Fitzwal

ton will be glad to get her off his hands. Old Mitching is as big a fool as ever, and his wife as pretty and piquant, and delightful as—well, as what, as whom?—as Mrs. Mitching. If Emmy only joined to her good sense and spirit the liveliness and amiability of Mrs. M., what a jewel she would be!

Write to me soon; and if you want me to come over and punch old Muddle's head, you have only to say the word, and I will be with you, and assault him *à la* Chrissy Kenrick.—I am your affectionate

TOM FOLGATE.

ESTHER WILTON TO CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

Lindford, October 15th, 18—.

MY DEAR KENNY—Oh how delicious it is to have your kind, good, *clever* letters! You cannot think what sunshine they bring with them. I watch the postman through the blind every morning, and when he does not stop, I nearly cry; but when he does, oh! you should see my face, and see how cheerfully I go about all day.

I read the paper, and your dear, *learned* article about the state of the docks. If I did not understand it all,—as how should I who am so ignorant?—I could easily see that it was clever and wise, as everything you do is. How you must study, my dear! Do be careful, and not work too hard.

It must be delightful *to paint*, and I am glad you are studying that. If you could only have seen Old

Monk's Chapel yesterday, there was a picture to paint, dear Kenny. I went there to *think* about you, and the leaves were all falling. Sometimes I go into the cathedral, and walk about the aisle where we walked together *one Saturday afternoon;* do you remember, dear, when you told me all about how you ran away from home, and was poor, and made me cry, but only that you might kiss my tears away, and call me your dear, silly, little girl, which I am, dear, *dear* Kenny?

Emmy seems very miserable, and I cannot understand why, when she sees Mr. Folgate every day, nearly. Oh, if we saw each other every day! Next to that, comes your dear letters, which I look for so anxiously.

Excuse all mistakes, and let my true love atone for the silly letters of—Yours always, and forever,

ESTHER.

I pass over some intermediate communications, and come to a terrible little packet that gives me a thrill of pain even now. At the end of October, Miss Julia Belmont was announced to play *Rosalind* at a neighboring theatre, fourteen miles from Harbourford. I was very miserable at the time, having given notice to leave the *Messenger*, and failed in obtaining some other employment which I sought. In desperation I started off to see Miss Belmont. She received me most kindly, and I went to the theatre at night. She played with more than her accus-

tomed fire. I was delighted with this change from Harbourford. Lodging at Harbourford with a person connected with the theatre, I had been cultivating my taste for the drama; and this visit to Julia Belmont seemed to attract me to the stage. I wrote a long and enthusiastic letter to Tom Folgate, telling him of my excursion; and describing in glowing terms the pleasant day I had spent with Julia Belmont. I also mentioned, though with much less enthusiasm, my excursion in a letter to Esther. The result of this indiscretion, if it was an indiscretion, will be best shown in the following correspondence.

Emma Wilton to Christopher Kenrick.

Lindford, November 1st, 18—.

Sir—Mr. Tom Folgate has read your letter to me, and I have felt bound, as a sisterly duty, to read it to Esther, in order that she might see your character in its true light, and judge how wise or otherwise she has been in giving up a wealthy suitor who loves her, for one who is *a common flirt*, and who has not even a respectable profession to back up his pretensions. Your conduct, sir, in visiting an actress, with whom it was shrewdly suspected you were on too intimate terms at Lindford, quite fulfils my estimate of you, though, I confess, I was willing to believe better of you, and had made up my mind to offer no obstruction to your engagement with my sister.

You have now, sir, forfeited all the little good opinion I had of you; and, by my advice, the sanction of my mother, and with the approval of Mr. Tom Folgate, my sister Esther returns all your letters, and congratulates herself upon the escape she has had out of the hands of a villain. Yes, sir, I use a strong term; but not stronger than that warm language in which you painted your happy day with Miss ———, I forget her name, the actress who played at Lindford; and no wonder you stayed and supped with her, as you had done *once* before at Lindford.

It would seem you are a fool as well as a knave, or you would never put your treachery upon paper for others to read. Farewell; and when you marry that player lady, I may, perhaps, patronize you at your benefit. You will, no doubt, call if you should come to perform at Lindford, and ask us to take tickets. Meanwhile, we will have no more of your acting love off the stage.—Your very obedient servant,

EMMA WILTON.

TOM FOLGATE TO CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

DEAR KENNY—There is the devil to pay. You had better write a very penitent letter, or else that fellow Howard will outbid you. Confound that girl! I know I had no business to let her have the letter. What, in heaven's name, did you write it for? You did wrong, Kenny,—there is no doubt about that,—

in renewing your acquaintance with Miss Belmont, and being so very happy. But you did worse in bragging of it. However, write a most penitent letter to Esther, and, I dare say, affairs can be put right.—Ever yours,

TOM.

The same post brought a heavy packet of my letters, directed in Esther's handwriting. Inside the envelope were these words—"Cruel, cruel Kenrick." Outside the envelope, in pencil, I afterward traced, "They made me do it—I do love you," in the same familiar hand.

I wrote off immediately an affectionate but manly protest to Esther, and sent her back the letters. My love for her, I said, demanded trust and confidence, equal to all that faith which I had in her own truth and goodness. I rebuked her gently with her haste to condemn me. I reminded her of our happy hours, and conjured her by the great and undying love I bore her, to believe in me.

I learnt in after-years that there was another who watched for letters besides Esther, and that this one never reached its destination. Emmy Wilton got it and put it into the fire. I waited post after post for a reply from Esther, and one morning there came a repetition of that other hastily-written scrap; but it came too late—too late! The wretched character of my engagement at Harbourford, and the loss of that through my pride and ambition, which could not

stoop to the menial offices of a venal newspaper, this terrible blow from Lindford, which almost broke my heart, together with the low state of my finances, so preyed upon me, that I fell into a serious illness, and lay in a miserable state of unconsciousness for many days. That hurried scrap, "They made me do it—I do love you," only caught my eye weeks after it was received, and then I replied, "Believe in me, and we shall yet realize those happy dreams of Lindford." But no reply came. Those dear hopes, which had filled my soul with such pleasant images, had been too bright to last.

Disraeli the elder relates in his Miscellany how love has been regarded, not merely as a passion of the soul, but also a disease of the body, like the fever. Huet argued that it was frequently in the blood, and might be treated and cured as methodically as any other disorder. The great Condé having felt a violent passion for Mademoiselle de Vigeau, was constrained to join the army. His love lasted all through the campaign, when he fell into a serious illness. Upon recovering his health, his passion was gone. Blood-letting was, indeed, recommended as a cure for love, and the efficacy of this system was illustrated by the story of a German who was desperately in love with a German princess. She was not insensible to a reciprocal passion, and in order that he might be near her person she created him a general. Eventually, the princess proved fickle, and gave the general his *congé*. He found, however,

that it was impossible to live out of her presence, so one day he intercepted her, and threw himself at her feet. She commanded him to quit her presence, which he refused to do. He was ready to obey every order but that, even if she commanded his death, saying which, to enforce his eloquent appeal with a splendid attitude, worthy of the melo-dramatic stage, he drew his sword and presented it to the princess. Interpreting his rhetorical flourishes literally, she took the blade and ran him through the body. Fortunately, saith the chronicler, he was healed of his wound at the end of three months, and likewise of his passion, which had flowed away with the effusion of blood.

The logic of the conclusion is somewhat questionable. I was reminded of the story by my own feelings at awakening, as it were, out of this illness.

By and by I will describe to you my lodgings, and the most quaint and poor, but estimable, people amongst whom I had sojourned in this far-away seaport of Harbourford.

In the mean time let me put my case as a contrary illustration to the theory of love being a disease of the body as well as of the mind.

Of course it is nonsense, this theory, at the commencement, and I am not treating it as a serious matter, for there is a fine bit of satire in that story of the German princess. You do, nevertheless, come out of a severe illness with passion toned down and *hopes softened*, with friendships somewhat clouded.

with aspirations weakened, with a clearer knowledge of the vanity of human wishes.

It seemed to me, sitting up in bed with that patch-work counterpane round my shoulders, and looking at the pale light on the snow, that I had had a strange dream. I knew it was more than a dream. I knew that Stoneyfield was a reality. I remembered my tears on that misty autumn morning years ago. I felt a thrill of happy remembrance of Lindford, and I knew that those hours of bliss with Esther Wilton in these green meadows by the river were real: but they were misty now, these things. They did not come up fresh and sharp in the memory. My mind seemed to stretch out its arms to them, and reach them not. They were shadowy and dim, yet I could see them and feel them, though they would not be fully realized. Yet my love for Esther Wilton,—there it was in my heart, a real passion still, a burning thought, a trembling hope. The lamp was burning; it only required the smallest encouragement to blaze up and illuminate the void there was about it. But I dared not trim the lamp. My heart told me it were best to let it slumber there, with a remote chance that some day it might smoulder out, which were better than if it blazed up to light the way to another's happiness.

Perhaps my love for Esther had seemed a sweeter thing than it really was. My loneliness and friendlessness might have given a factitious importance to it. It was so rare for any one to take an interest in

me at that time. May this not have deceived me? I tried to argue my love away after this fashion; and then went to sleep with Esther's last dear letter wet with my tears; for I was so weak and forlorn here in this strange Harbourford, that the least thing would upset me. A tender poem, a gentle word, a sad story in a newspaper, would make me weep like a school-girl. This wore off, however, as I regained my strength. It was, nevertheless, a long time before I stood up fairly and boldly again to confront the world with the vigor and determination of a conqueror.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHAPTER BY THE WAY, IN WHICH INCIDENT TAKES THE PLACE OF CRITICISM.

If it had occurred to me that a story of love and disappointment would crop up, in my own household, during the course of my narration of these other adventures, I should not have been persuaded to introduce extra chapters by the way. "Our fate, hid within an auger-hole, may rush and seize us."

It is "so with us." I sit down to write my own life. I am induced by my family to insert within the current narrative, like leaves in a dessert dish of apples, these wayside chapters. Fate steps in and decrees that there shall be a story here, too, a sad love tale, and I have no choice but compliance. Whilst I have been poring over the history of my own early days, a little romance has been going on in my own family; and the climax has come just at that particular time when the reader's thoughts should be concentrated upon my own adventures.

The reader, I fear, will plume himself upon his discernment. He will have felt certain that the Rev. Paul Felton was not an honest, good man. When I turn back to that chapter on etiquette, I can now see that I depict more of the sneak than the saint. There is almost an apology for him in my

own remarks; and the doubts of my eldest daughter will have satisfied the reader that the Rev. Paul Felton's character is not of that pure and religious cast which we had all tried to hope and believe it was.

It is the opening of the new year—not New-Year's Day, not New-Year's Eve. The threshold has been crossed. We crossed it in tears and in anger. We are now in the portal. The cause of our passion will be found in the conversation that follows.

"It is an infernal insult; and I'll be hanged but I'll kick the fellow before his flock," says my son Tom, clanking his spurs on the library carpet.

"That is nonsense, Tom. You must not strike a clergyman," I say, quietly.

"Then I'll pull his nose—I will, by heavens!"

"Tom is sure to keep his word, father," says Bess, casting encouraging glances at her brother.

"Just as you had secured his promotion, too," Mrs. Kenrick says.

"And to make his very success an excuse for jilting the girl," exclaims Tom. "He 'thinks the fact of his being called to a higher sphere of labor the condition of parties is changed,' does he?—the beast!"

"Tom, Tom, it is hardly worth while to exhibit so much excitement here," I say. "I wish the fellow were a layman, for all our sakes."

"By the Lord, I'm glad he is not," Tom replies; "his conduct would disgrace the name of layman."

"Bravo, Tom!" says Bess. "If a parson is bad, he's like a bad woman, desperately wicked."

"Comes here a twopenny-halfpenny curate, you secure him a valuable living, and then the girl who was worthy of him as a curate is not fit for the higher sphere: why, damn the fellow, I have not common patience to think there is such a disgusting sneak unhung," roars out my son, beating his trousers with his riding-whip until the dust surrounds him like the smoke of battle.

"Tom, do not let us have this barrack-room language before your mother and sister," I say.

"All right, sir, I'll say no more; but there is no cloth ever spun by human hands that shall protect Paul Felton from a tweaked nose."

With this remark Tom strides out of the room, and in a few minutes afterward we all watch him galloping across the country on his favorite mare. What a fine fellow the rogue is! If this Felton were a layman, I should, indeed, like him to be horse-whipped by Tom Kenrick.

"Where is Cissy?" I inquired by and by.

"In her room," says Mrs. Kenrick.

"Does she take it much to heart?" I ask.

"She does," says Mrs. Kenrick. "She not only loved this man, but all the villagers have prepared for the wedding."

"How she could have liked this fellow is a mystery to me," says Bess.

"She did, and does," says Mrs. Kenrick.

"What, now?" exclaims Bess.

"Yes, now," says Mrs. Kenrick.

"Has she no pride?" asks Bess, quickly, her eyes flashing with anger.

"None," replies Mrs. Kenrick, mildly. "She would sue to him even now."

"Great heavens!" says Bess, solemnly. "Then this thing you call love is a mystery indeed."

I do not feel inclined to lead Bess into a metaphysical discussion of that said mystery; so I merely raise my eyes, as much as to say, "Indeed it is, Bess."

"What is to be done?" says Mrs. Kenrick, who has a very practical notion of settling all difficulties in some way.

"You must try and make Cissy understand that she has narrowly escaped from being married to a villain, and—"

"I thought you knew human nature better than that, Christopher," says Mrs. Kenrick, interrupting me. "You gentlemen who write novels, and profess to be so deeply versed in the human heart, have strange notions, it would seem, when the real story, the real pang, the true heart-break, comes before you. Cissy is a true woman. She loved this man with all her heart, and she believes that his decision is right. She gives him credit for nothing but a true, pure, good purpose in breaking off the engagement. Her only difficulty is to find resignation under the blow. Tell her Paul Felton is a villain—

as we know him to be—and she will despise your judgment; persist in it, and she will despise you."

Mrs. Kenrick's fire and eloquence amazed me. As I watched her glowing cheek, and listened to her sweet voice, ringing like a bell with unaccustomed vigor, I felt a rush of the old love in my heart: I remembered how she had clung to that poor, desolate boy, in dark and dreary days long ago. If I had turned out to be a Paul Felton, she would have mourned me for the memory of her own pure image of me.

I kiss my wife tenderly on the forehead.

"You are a good woman," I say. "What shall we do—go abroad?"

"Perhaps a little change would be advisable," she says. And then, squeezing my hand, she leaves the room in tears, Bess following her with a puzzled, sympathetic air, like one who pities for pity's sake, but does not understand that there is great cause for grief.

There is nothing like a long, quick walk in the country when you are troubled. When that great writer, whom you all know, saw that separation from his wife was really to be part of his marvellous history, he walked twenty miles without resting.

I will go and see my friend, Father Ellis, and then write my next chapters of Kenrick with what grace I may. The mind has many moods. The strong-willed can change it how he listeth. From present woes to past trials and sorrows, is, perhaps,

no very difficult task. We shall see. I have written down chapter XIX. before I start. It pleased Thackeray to have the commencement of a new chapter, or a new work, always begun. This helps a vigorous, determined mind; but it affects the slothful in a different way. I knew an author who never got beyond a title-page. He had several books in his mind, the title-pages of three ready written, and one actually in print. Beyond this he never advanced. He looked too far into the future. He christened his ship and began to make her sails before the vessel was built. My poor Cissy has thought about the style of her wedding-dress, and lo and behold, there is no bridegroom!

CHAPTER XIX.

MY LODGINGS AT HARBOURFORD.

An old-fashioned, gabled house over an archway, in a back street that led to some miserable tenements; an old-fashioned, gabled house that had once been part of an ancient chapel. This was Abel Crockford's residence. You entered it by a dark staircase beneath the archway, and when you reached the end of the staircase you came into an up-stairs kitchen, a painter's studio, and three bedrooms. The kitchen was part of an old room that had once been somewhat pretentious, and there was still left a fireplace of an ancient date and a picturesque style. There was an air of poverty in the room, but it was cleanly. The rough, patched stone walls were adorned with rough, sketchy, ill-framed pictures in oil. A few plants looked green at all seasons in the patched mullioned window, and Mrs. Crockford was a neat, dapper little woman, who was always trying to make the place seem cheerful. By the old-fashioned chimney-piece there was an arm-chair, which had been made up out of a throne. Yes, sir, a throne that had done duty for kings and queens at the old Harbourford Theatre Royal before that establishment was burnt down and rebuilt; and this throne had been amongst the few things rescued

from the flames. It had required much strengthening with battens and nails, and much padding with wool, and canvas, and chintz, before it assumed that cozy appearance which it has in presence of the fire-light from that capacious old chimney.

What is all this description about? do you ask. Why am I keeping you in suspense? I am describing my lodgings at Harbourford, dear sir; my nest during those dark days of fever and delirium, dear madam; my home, when I was down and fainting by the way, *très chers amis*.

Well, out of this kitchen you reached a room nearly as large. There were two easels in this second apartment, and a fierce smell of paint; for the artists who worked there ground their own colors, and used strong material. Abel Crockford was a sign-painter and scene-painter, and he wrote inscriptions on coffin-plates. His ambition was scene-painting; his fate was signs. Now and then he produced bits of color which drew forth high commendation. He had once done a fairy glen, which was pronounced, at Harbourford, the perfection of scenic art; but sign-boards were Abel's most successful achievements, and nobody could touch him for taste and expedition in coffin-plates. Upon the walls of his rough art-studio were hung various examples of Abel's work, chiefly studies of trees and copies of pictures. Here and there were examples of letters, and sketches of pictorial sign-boards; with bits of theatrical scenery, strips of

rock and water, patches of sky and foliage, and a mask or two—remnants of some grotesque extravaganza. Upon one side of the studio, however, there was a picture in a frame, a work of large dimensions, carefully covered with a curtain. Close by was a small table, upon which there were several old prints, a work on the old masters of art, a magnifying-glass of an ancient make, and some writing-paper.

This concealed picture represented Abel Crockford's dream of greatness. We have all our hopes of fame and wealth. This was Abel's; but of that "anon, anon, sir," as Francis says in the play.

From this temple of the graces branched off three bedrooms; one in which I slept, another set apart for Abel and his wife, and a third which was in too ruinous a condition for occupation. The property belonged to the Corporation of Harbourford, and it was let on a repairing lease at a nominal rent. Abel Crockford had succeeded in keeping the other part of the house whole, but this third chamber defied all his efforts, and so he permitted it to become picturesque, as he said, and fit for the researches of learned antiquarians, who came now and then from distant parts to see the old archway and its tumble-down house overhead.

I could not complain of my room, even if I had been able to pay my rent regularly; it was always clean, it was always sweet, it was always natty. There was no carpet on the floor, except just round the little bed. My looking-glass hung on the wall,

and there was a curtain round it to set it off. My dressing-table was made out of an old tea-chest, but then it was decorated with white and pink dimity. I had a real washstand, flanked with a bit of real oil-cloth. There was an oak chest of drawers in the room, with a score or more books of my own upon the top, besides sundry magazines, an old Shakspeare, and a "Whole Duty of Man," upon some hanging shelves. Several of Abel's rough sketches were exhibited on the walls. The window was an old stone design, with a stone seat in a deep recess, like the look-out of an old Elizabethan house. I sat here often between Mrs. Crockford's chintz curtains, and watched the children at play up the court beyond. I sometimes envied them, even despite their rags and dirt. Now and then their merry games were rudely arrested by some drunken drab beating her offspring, and then my heart would bleed for all poor and unhappy children.

Pity it was Abel Crockford had no little ones. He was a noble, honest-hearted fellow, and his wife believed in him above all men. Yet Abel was poor and ignorant, and his wife could neither read nor write. Abel's ignorance, however, was not of a dense character. He had great intelligence, and, with education, would have made a great man. An eye for the beautiful in nature and in art, he appreciated a good book, a happy thought, a bright stroke of imagination, and a rare piece of music. From *sign-painting* he had risen to a fair position, as

assistant scenic artist at the Harbourford Theatre, and there were many rough little studies upon his walls that were creditable works.

The dream of his life latterly had been to get money enough to buy the queer old house in which he lived; and this hope had been fostered by the purchase of a somewhat remarkable picture, which Abel firmly believed would one day be sold for many thousands of pounds.

This was how he told me the history of that picture:

"I bought him, sir, Mister Kenrick, the time as you was took ill, just after you come here to lodge. I see him in a winder, for sale; and says I to myself, that's a work of art; not as you could see him, sir, Mister Kenrick, because you couldn't, for he was black with the dust and varnish of ages. I knowed the man as had him, so I says, 'What for the picter?' and he says, 'I ain't going to sell him until the Catholic priest has seen him—he's a judge.' 'Where did you get the picter?' says I. 'He was bought at the dean's sale, when nobody was a lookin',' says he. 'What's the price?' says I. 'I wants ten pound for him,' says he; 'but maybe I shall want more when the priest has seen him.'"

Whilst Abel is telling his story, Mrs. Crockford looks up from her stocking mending, and smiles approvingly at her lord, who is standing by the fire, pointing each sentence earnestly with his pipe.

"Well, I comes home, and I says to my missus—didn't I, dame—"

"Yes, Abel, you did."

"I says, 'Missus, there's a fortun' in that picter. I knowed the dean's brother; he was a great traveller, and was in the wars; he captured that picter,' I says, 'in some palace, and it's the work of a great master. If I can raise the money,' says I, 'that picter's mine.' 'You knows best,' was all my missus says. I knowed a working man once as bought a picter at a sale, and he sends him to be cleaned and done up, and the man as done him up, says he, 'I'll give you ten pounds for him,' sir, Mr. Kenrick, and the man wouldn't, and from that the picter got wind, and at last he were sold for ten thousand pounds. Yes, sir, Mister Kenrick."

Abel was quite overcome at the thought of that worthy man's good fortune. He refilled his pipe, and Mrs. Crockford laid down her stocking to hear Abel tell the story all over again.

"I goes to the shop again, and as luck would have it, sir, Mr. Kenrick, the priest was there, an' he says to the man, says he, 'I do not think anything of this picture; sell it for several pounds and have done with it.' Says I, 'Well, I'm a poor man, but I can do the frame up a bit,' says I, 'and clean him, and make a trifle out of him; he's in a shocking bad state, and I'll give you five pounds for him,' says I, Mister Kenrick, sir. 'Take the money, my man,' says the priest; and so he did, and I gives him every penny as we'd saved for a rainy day,—did I not, missus?"

"You did, Abel," says Mrs. Crockford.

"Well, sir, Mister Kenrick, I brings him home, and I was dreadful sorry you was ill, and I couldn't have your advice. When I brought him home, there was only one figure, or part of one to be seen; that was a knight in armor; but there was light and shade in that figure, Mister Kenrick, sir, as showed me he was a grand picter. Well, sir, Mister Kenrick, I sets to at him—I sets to and washes him well to begin with, careful, sir, and I rubs him with a silk handkercher, and I notices that a great block of wood, or a door-step, or a coffin, or whatever something was near this knight, began to appear like a man, a dead 'un; so I perseveres and says nothing; and days go on, and I rubs away to get the old varnish off, and I was regular unearthing a buried body, sir, Mister Kenrick; and in a week I restores to daylight the figure of a dead soldier, at which the other figure was gazing. They had fought, I s'pose, and one had killed the other. Well, sir, Mister Kenrick, I sees at once he's a grand picter; and I begins to talk about him. One or two gentlemen comes to look at him, and I gets an offer of fifty pounds for him. I rigs him up then on some tressels, with a bit of cloth behind him and a curtain in the front, and the priest he comes to see him. He looks at him, and at last he says, 'I never see that picter until now; that's a different thing to the picter I see before; he's a prize, my man, he's a prize.' Then others comes in, and they talks of him

being by this man and the other, this school and that, and I gets a hundred offered for him. Yesterday I has that doubled."

"I hope to goodness you will not overstep your market," I say.

"No, I'll not do that, sir, Mister Kenrick. I knows what I'm doing; and I've got a little surprise for you, too, sir."

I was still weak, but strong enough to think of work. I had taken a fierce dislike to the press since the sudden termination of my Harbourford engagement. The equally sudden termination of my Lindford dream had settled much of that ambition and patience which had helped me to bear many of the ills connected with reporting on the *Harbourford Messenger*. Abel had noticed this, and my love for the drama had started a scheme in his mind for my benefit.

"I have got your violin back, Mister Kenrick, sir. I knew where you'd sold him, and I've got him back. Don't be angry, sir; I've not been and paid for him, but here he be."

Thereupon, Abel produced my old violin, with a bundle of fresh strings in a tin box, the instrument in perfect order. I could not speak; and Abel suddenly professed to have important business in his painting-room. A delicate, generous act like this from a poor man, and a comparative stranger, affected me very much, and my hands trembled over that first old bit of melody which my favorite bow drew from the sympathetic strings—

"What's this dull world to me,
Robin Adair?"

Simple words, delicious melody! It is an old song that my mother sang to me in those few bright intervals of childhood when I was not being beaten or denounced as a good-for-nothing child that could not possibly come to any good. "What's this dull world to me?" The very sentiment was in my heart; and its morbid complaining affected my already broken health, until Abel's eyes were fixed upon me for a moment with a bright humane sparkle as he produced that old violin which had been a solace to me in so many weary hours.

In the evening Abel, in his hearty, ignorant way, said—

"Well, Mr. Kenrick, sir, I've bin and got you what you calls an engagement."

"Indeed, Abel. What is it?"

"Second fiddle in the orchestra," said Abel, looking straight at me, "if you be not too proud to do it."

"Too proud, Abel!" I exclaimed. "If I am not too ignorant of the work."

"You can do it," said Abel. "I have no fear of that: it's fifteen shilling a week for the season, which be two months; and there be no knowing, Mr. Kenrick, sir, what may turn up in the mean time."

It boots not to tell how I entered upon this new *duty, and how* I succeeded. The strange incidents

of the work come back to me now like broken pieces of a colored window. I see the color, I detect bits of pattern, but there is no oneness anywhere amongst them. They are indicative of gas-light and dirty daylight; they reflect tawdry, tinselled garments and patchy scenes; they smell of stale tobacco and orange-peel; their very jingle, as I push them aside, brings up a blundering memory of old-world waltzes and quadrilles, and of bits of tragic accompaniments done in a vigorous *tremoloso*, though "Robin Adair" puts in one bar to give a touch of pathos to the jumble of strange sounds.

I sat for several weeks in that little orchestra of the Harbourford Theatre, a pale, thin, ghost-like young man; and I played second fiddle to the full satisfaction of the management. Once, in theatrical parlance, the ghost did not walk, or, in more general language, the management could pay no salaries. But the arrival of two Yankee ships in port redeemed the fortunes of the theatre, and the company were suddenly so much in funds that several gentlemen rushed into the extravagance of new neck-ties; whilst the ladies indulged in new bonnets and a Sunday trip to Potty Island, with shrimps and tea.

My time was fully occupied at this period; and I attribute my sanity to the healthy stimulus of occupation. I rose at an early hour, and commenced the day in Abel's studio. With the aid of an elementary work on oil-painting and Abel's experience I succeeded in producing several copies of

borrowed pictures, which a broker purchased for a few shillings each. I followed this success up by one or two efforts at original work, and I remember me of a triumph of trees and water, which Abel sold to a patron for ten shillings and sixpence. When I was not called to rehearsal in a morning, I stood at my easel until it was time for the evening performance. I look back now to the almost unexpected effects of color in that poor scene-painter's studio, and feel all those early sensations of reawakened ambition as keenly as if I had not lived to gray hairs and family responsibilities.

At odd times I sat down and tried my hand at essays for newspapers and magazines—wayside stories, incidents of life, and other fugitive papers. I posted them with trembling hands to London editors, and looked up their periodicals at the local libraries, but those magical initials "C. K." did not appear in print, except once in a harsh "Notice to Correspondents." Moreover, my manuscripts were rarely returned, though I treasure to this day the polite letter of one editor, who was good enough to say there was promise in my work, though my style was too amateurish for the publication over whose fortunes he presided.

I wrote several letters to my mother, but got no reply. The same fate attended my letters to Mr. Mitching; and two which I wrote to Tom Folgate came back through the Dead Letter Office, marked "Gone." The following communication from Mr.

Fitzwalton was a mystery which time alone solved. Fitzwalton wrote as though I knew all that had transpired during my absence from Lindford:—

MR. FITZWALTON TO CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

DEAR KENRICK—I received your favor in due course, and was sorry to hear that you had been so very ill; at which, however, I do not wonder, seeing what sad events have occurred on all hands since your departure from this ill-fated city.

Everybody knew that Tom Folgate was rather loose, but none of us expected he would do what he has done. I am sure it must grieve you very much; but "such is life," dear Kenrick. We all have our troubles. I am going to leave this place for London, where I have purchased a partnership.

You will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that my sister-in-law, Miss Birt, is going to be married to your opponent in the famous battle, Mr. Noel Stanton, who is, after all, a very nice fellow.

What changes a few short months bring about! I have not been to Stoneyfield lately, but I hear your father bears his loss with manly fortitude.—I am, yours truly,

W. FITZWALTON.

I pored over this epistle for hours. I wrote for explanations that Fitzwalton would not give. "His new business occupied all his time," he said; and

he "could not believe that I did not know quite as much of what had passed as he did, and more especially as that Folgate scandal was in all the papers. If I really did not know all about it, perhaps I had better remain in blissful ignorance, or pay a visit to Lindford, and make personal inquiries on the spot."

This was all I could get from Fitzwalton, and I was so much offended at the coolness of his reply and its formal style, that I tied up his letters with another little bundle, and allowed the tide of fate and fortune to flow on without further inquiry or interruption. The last sentence of Fitzwalton's letter, too, seemed so much like a sneer, that I was inclined to be very angry with the writer on this account. "Your father bears his loss with manly fortitude!" I remembered that the very first time I met Fitzwalton in Lindford he sneered at my running away from home. "And this is friendship!" I said.

What a blessing it was, at these times, that easel in Abel Crockford's painting-room!

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH I TELL ABEL CROCKFORD THE STORY OF VELASQUEZ.

"THE more I paint," I said to Abel, one morning, "the more I understand the value of that picture."

"Ah, he be a grand chap," Abel responded, uncovering the work, "and I've this very moment almost hit upon a new idea about him, which I don't mean to say nothing about until I've carried it out."

"Strange, a new thought about it has occurred to me," I said.

"Have it now?" said Abel, dipping the end of a new clay pipe into a cup of coffee, which Mrs. Crockford had brought into the painter's room, as was her custom every morning at seven o'clock.

"Do you know the story of Pareja and Velasquez, Abel?"

"I do not."

"Then I'll tell it to you whilst you are putting in that bit of sky."

"Thank you, Mr. Kenrick, sir," said Abel, standing back from his easel, and holding his head knowingly on one side to see the effect of a "promiscuous-like" dab of indigo and brown madder.

"Pareja," I said, "was a slave, literally kicked into the studio of Velasquez by a famous Spanish admiral, who made a present of the youth to the famous painter. They called the boy Pareja, after his master, and the painter's pupils made a drudge of the woolly-headed little fellow. He was at the beck and call of everybody, he cleaned the palettes, ground the colors, and indeed was a slave in every respect, getting considerably more kicks than half-pence. His master, however, treated him kindly, and the slave held him in the highest admiration. One day Pareja—in that imitative spirit which is characteristic of man, whether he be bondman or freeman—tried to paint. Of course he made a terrible hash of the business, as I did, Abel, when first I took up the brush; but the true passion was excited, and Pareja hied himself to a deserted garret in his master's house, and there set up an easel. He had nothing but old, disused brushes to work with, and the refuse color from the painting-room. Early in the mornings, and at other odd times, he found a wonderful charm in daubing the colors upon bits of board. By and by he improved, until the forms that he produced really gave him a positive delight, such as the real artist feels at his own success—"

"Go on, sir, I be listening—I baint looking at yon bit of sky—I'm trying to see that slave at work in his garret," said Abel, when I paused for a moment in my narrative.

"One day King Philip the Fourth and the great Rubens honored Velasquez with a visit. In the train of the king were the noblest grandees in the land. Following Rubens were Vandyck, Sneyders, Van Norden, and other celebrated pupils of the king of painters. Rubens was most favorably impressed with the works of Velasquez. The latter said his cup of happiness would be full if Signor Rubens would leave a stroke of his pencil upon one of his pictures. Presenting a palette to the great master, Velasquez pointed to his chief works. 'All these,' said Rubens, with that peculiar grace which indicates the perfect gentleman, 'are finished, yet will I make an attempt.' At the same moment he picked up a piece of panel which was lying against the wall, in an out-of-the-way corner. Turning it round to see if this offered an opportunity for leaving behind a souvenir of his art in the studio of Velasquez, the great master uttered an exclamation of surprise, as his eye fell upon the picture afterward so famous as 'The Entombment.' This was the work of—"

"Pareja, the slave!" exclaimed Abel, his bright eyes blazing with excitement. "Wonderful, wonderful!"

"The slave had caught the inspiration of his master," I continued, "and had worked in secret, struggling with his own genius. That day opened up a glorious career to him. His master embraced him, and Pareja became famous. His attachment to his master was so great that he was killed at last in a

street attack, whilst defending the husband of his master's daughter. He died, thanking God that he had been permitted to lay down his life for the child of the great and magnanimous Velasquez."

There were tears in Abel's eyes when I had finished, and he sat still for several minutes apparently looking at that bit of blue and madder; but picturing in his mind the wonderful career of the Spanish slave.

"Now, Abel, I tell you this story for two reasons; in the first place, that it may stimulate you and me to increased exertions: and, in the next place, because I believe your mysterious picture is either by Velasquez or by his famous pupil."

Abel stood upright at once, and came toward his picture.

"Stay," I said, interrupting him, "there are such things as copies, and this may only be a copy; if so, its intrinsic value is not, perhaps, so very great, but we must look up the history of the works of these great artists."

"Mister Kenrick, sir, excuse me; I'll be back in an hour or so, and throw some more light on that picter. I don't care who he's by or whether he's original. If he was by that slave, I should almost worship him,—in fact, I almost does now,—and I questions as long as I can get bread and cheese if I shall sell him, unless it be to get money enough, Mister Kenrick, sir, not to buy this house, but to pay some painter to let me see him at work, and give me

some instruction. I'll be an artist yet, Mister Kenrick, mark my words, sir; you haven't told me that story for nothing."

Hereupon Abel fastened his apron (he would wear an apron) round his waist, put on his coat, and disappeared. In less than an hour he returned. As he came into the house, I heard him say to Mrs. Crockford, "Don't bother about breakfast yet, dame; we'll come when we be ready."

His face was aglow with satisfaction. In his hand he held the catalogue of a sale by auction.

"It occurs to me, Mr. Kenrick, sir, as there would be some miscellaneous lots at the dean's sale, and I finds out the man as bought some sundry books for five shilling. I goes to him, gives him half-a-crown for what he has left on 'em, and here's the very thing; here's the picter, sold in London thirty years ago, 'artist unknown,' and knocked down to the dean for twenty pound."

"You are an ingenious, clever man, Abel," I said. "That catalogue may be of great service, and your discovery of it is as good as a bit of detective police work."

"I've heard as we knows more about the value of picters now, nor we did thirty years agone."

"Much more so, Abel, and it would not surprise me, if we could have a search in London, that your picture is worth the money at which you value it."

"There be thousands in him, Mister Kenrick, sir.

I thought as I'd discovered letters on him one day. He's a great picter."

"No doubt."

"Some of the people as come to see him goes mad about him. A lady, the other day, found a tear on the knight's cheek. I can't see it, but there's wonderful sorrow in them eyes, sir."

"The figure is rather stunted, Abel."

"Well, Mr. Kenrick, sir, I've never heard that said afore; but the criticism as I hears on him makes me laugh sometimes, when I'm in a laughing humor; otherwise I'se fit to get into a rage. One will say, for instance, 'Ah, the light and shade is beautiful.' Another will say, 'Yes, yes, very good; but defective in light and shade.' Another will shake his head and say, 'Magnificent in color, Abel, but a little out of drawing.' The next chap will say, 'Weak in color, but fine in drawing; perspective perfect.' Then there's others as finds out bits of detail, and goes mad over the hands; and others as says the hands are 'queer, very queer; but the texture of the garments wonderful.' Some sees 'great softness and repose in the knight's face,' others think it 'decidedly hard.' Then there's them as is always sure there is more in the background, and advises me to have all that horrid varnish off; whilst another lot says, I've spoiled it with cleaning it, and that cleaning picters is Vandalism. No two is alike, and now you say the leading figure is stunted."

"Don't be angry, Abel."

"I baint, Mister Kenrick, sir; I be astounded."

"It is only the old story over again of the artist who placed his picture in the market-place for everybody to put their criticism into practical effect with paint and brush."

"And daubed it all out at last—I know, sir. They shan't daub this one, I can tell'ee, Mister Kenrick, sir; I'll have a big price for him if he's ever sold, and if he ain't sold, why I shall have all the enjoyment of possession, sir."

Thus we chatted on until Mrs. Crockford said breakfast was getting cold; and thus we talked and painted on many another morning afterward. They were happy days these, to a certain extent; but as I grew stronger and better, a fierce desire to know my real fate with regard to the girl in the lama frock took possession of me. And now and then, in bright sunny days, a whisper of ambition prompted me to look up out of the poor and miserable associations of Harbourford. The companionship of poor Abel (who, though he was good, was very ignorant), the reek of theatrical sawdust and orange-peel, the everlasting drone of ancient waltzes and quadrilles, and the garish gas and tawdry tinsel of the Harbourford stage, occasionally struck me as degrading. It seemed as if I were beginning to talk like Abel, as if I shuffled in my gait like that wretched prompter who played old men, and made the manager's trousers; it seemed as if the footlights were getting

into my brain, and burning a bad pastile made up of oranges and smoke, that I tasted with my mind. Unless I had gone into the fields now and then, and lain me down by that shingly river which ran out into the sea, I should have gone mad. Fancy becoming a melancholy mad fiddler, with your brain full of waltzes and orange-peel! Fancy becoming a maniac with a picture by Velasquez for sale, always telling the story of Pareja, and nodding knowingly to everybody like dear old Abel! What a friendless and forlorn fellow I was in these days, when the light of an ambitious nature began to be rekindled amidst those strange scenes at Harbourford! How one tender line from Esther, or one kind word from Stoneyfield (stony-hearted, cruel, infamous Stoneyfield!), might have raised me up!

Sometimes, at night, I could hear the rolling of the distant sea, and it pained me to think that all memory of Lindford, and the maiden I had left there, would be wiped out of that river in the Lindford meadows when the quiet meandering stream lost itself in the great waters. Where was she, this girl in the lama frock? This Esther Wilton, this soft-eyed gentle thing? Was she really false, like the rest? Had she been won by gold? Did she trust in those words of hope that I sent to her? Would she wait until we met again? Would the clouds clear away? Was there sunshine behind them? Or only black storm and wrack, and the darkness of night? I wearied myself with my vague question-

ings until one day in the spring, when a nearer approach to emancipation from doubt arrived through the visit of a famous actress to Harbourford. Miss Julia Belmont, of the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane and Haymarket, was announced to appear at our local theatre for six nights only!

CHAPTER XXI.

FRIENDS MEET AGAIN, AND ONE IS RICH.

WHY was I so particular in my toilet on that morning when I went to the first rehearsal during the Belmont engagement? Why did I walk with more elastic gait, and feel something like the sensation of newly conferred dignity? When I first knew that dear girl in the lama frock, I used to approach her presence with a sort of poetic fear, a dumbfounded kind of happiness. Yet here I was going to meet a lady of genius, one whom all Harbourford would run after, and whose wit made men quite humble and afraid. Here was I walking down the street like a conqueror, with neither fear nor alarm, until forsooth I suddenly remembered that I was only second fiddle in the orchestra at fifteen shillings a week. This was a terrible shock to my pride, and more particularly when I found that Miss Belmont had come to rehearsal in a hackney coach. That seemed like a reproach to my poverty. My heroship fell down to zero. I was going to flash upon her like a meteor. Suddenly I discovered myself to be not even a star in her hemisphere. She was the queen of the tragic muse. I played second fiddle. She lodged at the Royal Hotel and

came to rehearsal in a carriage. I lodged up a court, and—

It was a happy thought cropping up out of unhappy circumstances to steal into the property room, and borrow a wig and moustache. I did so, and Abel Crockford, who had come in at the moment, lent me his spectacles. They thought me a little mad; but my eccentricity was not particularly alarming amongst theatrical people who have license to do strange things. I sat in the orchestra, not a conqueror, not the envied of the company as I had promised myself, but second fiddle.

My lady looked charming. She was rounder and rosier than when I saw her last. There was a touch of pink and white in her cheeks such as Esther wore. Was it false? Was it like Mrs. Mitching's peach-bloom? I did not think these questions at the time; but I remembered being a little surprised. The actresses whom I had seen at Harbourford came to rehearsal without any complexions. They put these on at night. Moreover, they usually wore their oldest things at rehearsal; the theatre, they used to say, was "so dirty." But Miss Belmont looked as if she were dressed for the part of a duchess.

The piece was one of a most romantic character, and the music was of importance. More than once I thought Miss Belmont fixed her eyes upon me, in a searching, inquiring manner. At these times I professed to look very hard at my music, though I

could see but little through Abel Crockford's glasses. I never played so badly. If the leader had not been my friend I should assuredly have been snubbed before the London star.

There is no acting at rehearsals, as you know, at all events nothing like what you see at night. The Harbourford company were the more surprised at what they evidently considered much waste of power in Miss Belmont's occasional display of real histrionic force during rehearsal. She spoke one passage from the play with wonderful elocutionary effect, so much so that the manager applauded, and several members of the company followed suit; whilst the lady who had hitherto played the lead cast a contemptuous glance at a singing chambermaid who hoped some day to occupy an equally distinguished position.

I felt my heart beat a little wildly at these incidents, and more wildly still at the close, when Miss Belmont and the manager had a short conversation in my hearing.

"I had a dear friend in Harbourford," said the actress. "I first met him at Lindford; he was on the press there. Some time ago he came to the *Harbourford Messenger*."

"You are quite sure of good press notices here," said the manager, with an obsequious and cunning smile.

"I was not thinking of that," said the lady.

"Indeed!" said the manager, curiously.

"My friend was the son of a bookseller. They tell me at the *Messenger* he went to the bad, and became connected with your theatre."

"Was it necessary then that he should go to the bad before he qualified for the stage? I hope, Miss Belmont—"

I heard no more, but quietly slipped away beneath the stage, dropped my wig and spectacles into Abel's hands, bade him be mum, and disappeared.

I rushed off to my friend the shingly river. It was a bright spring morning. All Nature looked hopeful and joyous. The river rolled along over stones and pebbles with a happy chirruping song. What a change to the garish half-gaslight, half-daylight of the theatre! I walked rapidly, but not so quickly as my thoughts came and went.

"This woman loves me," I thought. "I knew she liked me at Lindford; but I was not conceited enough to think she loved me. Besides, were not all my thoughts occupied with another? Esther's jealousy and her sister's denunciations of my conduct, Miss Belmont's search for me this morning, and her charming toilet, in a manner confirm the thought of the morning, that the fair actress would accept my hand if I offered it. She is rich, they say, and will retire from the stage ere long. With all my industry I can earn little more than thirty shillings a week. I am in debt and difficulty. I owe Mrs. Crockford five pounds, and have not three

in the wide world. I could marry Julia Belmont, and snap my fingers at poverty."

These mercenary thoughts coursed through my brain as I walked by the Harbourford river. Poverty is a fierce demoralizer. How poor I was, how very poor I must have been to have reckoned up Miss Belmont's love, to have discounted marriage in this way! Now and then the river would stop and flow on at a bend, in low deep murmurs, like that old river in the Lindford meadows, as if it mocked me with the memory of those happy days when Esther Wilton hung upon my arm, or steered my boat through the rushes and the water-lilies. Early spring grasses and budding flowers nodded by the river, as if in sympathetic whisperings with its quiet moments; and then my heart would sink within me, yearning to know if Esther Wilton was still true to Christopher Kenrick. The clouds raced along in the sky, one after another, like bands of happy things, as if they said, "Onward, onward—life is motion; it is only the dullards who watch and wait—onward, onward." Julia Belmont seemed to beckon me. I heard the rustle of her silken dress and the music of her ringing voice. By and by the river would rush into a rough gorge and sing the same exciting song; but ever and anon a sweet, patient face looked up out of the troubled ocean of my memory, and it seemed as if the violets reflected back upon me the odor of its quiet maidenly presence.

When I reached my lodgings, I found the Crockfords in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, Mr. Kenrick, sir!" exclaimed Abel. "Miss Julia Belmont has been here, and left her card for you."

I took the card, and in the corner was printed a London address.

"She seemed so disappointed that you were not at home," said Mrs. Crockford.

"She be an out-and-out lady," said Abel.

"What a splendid dress, and yet she didn't seem to care a bit about it!" said Mrs. Crockford. "She went all over the house, and when I said it was a very poor place, she said you knew her when she had no better lodgings."

"I sold her three picters," said Abel: "two of yours, Mr. Kenrick, sir, and one of my own."

"You should not have done that, Abel," I said; "leave me to sell my own pictures."

"You've never sold 'em afore," said Abel, in great astonishment.

"What did she give you for them?"

"That be the best on it, Mister Kenrick, sir," said Abel, producing six or seven sovereigns.

"I thought so," I said.

"There be something the matter with you, Mister Kenrick, sir. You aren't offended with me?"

"No, Abel, my friend, I am not; there's my hand, and many thanks to you. Give me my share of the *plunder!*"

"Here it be, Mister Kenrick, sir—five pounds."

"That is just what I owe Mrs. Crockford," I said; and I handed her the money.

She resisted this payment, and so did Abel, until I said if they did not take it, I should return it to Miss Belmont.

"I cannot go to the theatre to-night, Abel," I said. "I am not well. What is to be done? If I play no better than I did this morning, I shall not be missed."

"I'll try and arrange it for you," said Abel.

"What is the matter?" Mrs. Crockford asked.

"Nothing, nothing; I shall be better in the morning."

We sat down to dinner in our plain, homely room, and the Crockfords continued to talk about Miss Julia Belmont. The manager had told Abel that the actress had recently come into a fortune. It made me mad almost, to feel that I continued to waver between what seemed to be a manly faithfulness to Esther Wilton and a mercenary attraction toward Miss Belmont.

During the afternoon I received the following note:

Royal Hotel, Harbourford.

DEAR MR. KENRICK—I have found you out. I know why you avoid me. You have not prospered in life, and I have. Were it otherwise, you would not have heard from me. Perhaps even now I out-

rage the proprieties; but you know what a contempt we both had for the narrow formalities of Lindford.

I am my own mistress, and have recently been left a handsome annuity. I think our acquaintanceship, coupled with my knowledge of your history, and the "fellow-feeling" which it excited in my own heart long ago, gives me the right to ask for a continuation of our friendship.

I cannot help feeling that if you were rich and you found me poor, you would go out of your way to remind me of the past, and place your treasury at my disposal.

Believe me, this is no ostentation on my part; the obligation is on my side.

You are often in my thoughts. Pray come and see me. It has made me wretched to think that you should avoid me.—Yours, most truly,

JULIA BELMONT.

The letter contained a bank-note for fifty pounds. I would fain have kept it; but for what? That I might go and seek out Esther: that I might once more stand before her, not a beggar, and hear my fate from her own lips. And supposing she were all she had been. Supposing the same old love existed. Supposing she came and nestled in my arms, my first love ("whoever loved that loved not at first sight?"), and repeated those words which I had discovered on that once cruel envelope. Why, then, not all the wealth of the Indies, as a legacy with

Julia Belmont, would take me from that early choice, the girl in the lama frock.

Should I spend Julia Belmont's money to fly to my early love? I flung the note aside at the thought of such an outrage. And, supposing I discovered Esther Wilton to be false. Supposing she were no better than Tom Folgate's notion of woman. Supposing that fellow Howard had really won her with his gold. Supposing I found her married. Would this bring me back to Julia Belmont? Should I not curse the gold that had helped me to such a discovery?

And could I marry Julia Belmont under any circumstances? An actress, who had languished in the arms of *Claude Melnottes* and *Othellos*, who had been kissed by *Romeos* and hosts of dramatic lovers. Could I take this second-hand beauty to my heart, having first been won by modest looks, trusting eyes, unsophisticated words, and real passion? I know now that I was unjust to Miss Belmont; but I was young and romantic still, despite that fever and the humble surroundings of my fallen fortunes. In maturer years, not even in thought should I have arraigned the professional position of Miss Belmont; but I could not help picturing the shrewd, clever actress and woman of the world, who would take care of me and give me money, against the dear little country girl, whom I should love and protect. "But she will retire from the stage," said my more mercenary feelings, "and the idea of a beggar like you

quarrelling with fortune—the idea of you daring for a moment to hesitate about marrying a beautiful woman who loves you, and is rich and accomplished! Perhaps she would not have you after all; it may be your own conceit, this fancy of yours."

I was goaded to death with contending doubts and fears. There was one thing about which I really did make up my mind. I would fiddle no more in the Harbourford orchestra. Julia Belmont should not see me in that position, at all events. Here I was wrong, no doubt. The manly thing would have been to continue in my course of labor, so long as it was honorable; and there was really nothing degrading, after all, in playing the fiddle in an orchestra. Many a good man has risen in the profession of music from humbler service. Besides, what should I have done without it? Remained a pensioner upon the bounty of poor Abel Crockford? No; I should not have done that. I was weak and ill and poor when I consented to receive Abel's aid. When I grew stronger, I oftentimes felt like some unhappy prince who had been kicked out of his dominions, and longed to be free of this forced state of lowliness. It was the proud blood of some of those long-dead Kenricks exciting in my veins the tamer fluid of tamer alliances. There was a time when the Kenricks figured at courts, when the men led armies and the women dazzled emperors. If it had not been for a drop of that old blue blood being still left in the family, I might have been living at Harbour-

ford now, perchance playing second fiddle in the orchestra.

In the evening I wrote a letter to Miss Julia Belmont, and returned the fifty pounds with as much gracefulness as the circumstances would permit of. I told her I hoped we should meet again some day; she under no less happy stars, myself with a brighter prospect before me. I assured her that I rejoiced in her good fortune, and counted myself happy in having so noble and generous a friend. If I called upon her, I said it would be in the morning; if I did not, I hoped she would not think the worse of me, and that she would not set down my present conduct to false pride.

I had half a mind to go and explain everything to her, including the result of my previous visit; but even at Lindford I had felt some unexplainable delicacy about mentioning Esther to her, and my mercenary prompter again suggested that, if my fortunes grew worse, I might still change my mind, and wish to marry the rich actress.

I was in a sea of doubt and difficulty. All I could do was to make desperate resolves to leave Harbourford on the morrow, go to Stoneyfield as the penitent runaway, or seek the advice of the Mitchings at Lindford. My desire to fathom the Folgate and Wilton mystery, too, had almost grown into a passion within the past few days. I did not like the idea that even Miss Belmont's purchase of the pictures would help me on my journey. It was some

satisfaction to know that I had barely touched the money; and if I started on the morrow, I should, after paying my tailor's bill, have but a sovereign and a half in my pocket. I could leave my violin and other little properties with Abel until I required them again.

I had a dream that night. I was married to Julia Belmont. We had a grand house, with statues on the staircase. Emmy Wilton had superintended the furnishing. I walked out of the drawing-room into Lindford Cathedral, and there in the cloisters I met Esther. "They made me do it; I do love you," she said; and my mother standing by with a white solemn face said, "It is just like him, poor boy, he is always in the wrong; but I love him too, I love him too."

And then I awoke, hot and feverish and afraid. It seemed as if a dead voice had spoken. I was going to be ill again, I felt sure of it. My previous attack came on something in this fashion. I drew the blind. It was a beautiful spring morning. The sun was just rising, sending streaks of silver and gold into that back court, where an ugly mist was rising from the gutters. It was like the breath of some fever-monster, this local exhalation; and trouble was lowering my nervous energy down again to victim point. I would be gone. I dressed hurriedly, wrote a short note for Abel, explaining that I had started for my father's house at Stoneyfield, where he should hear from me.

Out in the quiet streets, away into the broad highway, on by the open sea, I felt like a new being; and a draught of milk with brandy in it at a wayside inn confirmed my new sensations.

"Running away again," I said to myself; and then I thought of that misty autumn long ago, and all the events that had occurred since. "Running away from too much kindness and good fortune this time," I said, and I prayed in my heart that some of this glorious spring sunshine and its buds and blossoms might really mingle with my future.

"Surely," I said, "my winter is over, and the spring is at hand."

But it was not so. The snow fell again upon my poor fortunes. There was "winter in my purse" for many a day. The young buds of my latent hopes were frost-bitten. The sun of my prosperity was clouded. I trudged on through the great cold world, nevertheless, still looking for the spring-time and the summer.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CHAPTER BY THE WAY.

We have been travelling for Cissy's benefit, and change of scene brings back some of her wonted cheerfulness. It has come to Mrs. Kenrick's knowledge that the Rev. Paul Felton is about to be married. The engagement has been a short one, but the lady has money. She is a widow, and will no doubt know how to take care of it. I hope my son and the parson may not meet. Tom might forget himself. There will be little chance, however, of an encounter; for Tom has at last settled upon his regiment, and is to go to India.

This northern air is good for intellectual work, and physical labor too, for that matter. We are staying in Edinburgh for a few weeks. The season is wonderfully favorable for travelling. February never came in so mildly and with such spring airs. There is a chilly blast in the wind now and then; but it is open, genial weather generally.

Bess has drawn up her chair "for a good chat." "We must make up for lost time," she says; "I have been pitying your sufferings most cordially."

"His sufferings!" says Mrs. Kenrick in her quiet way; "your father has been romancing. Do you

think it is likely that he was ever so poor? And if he was, I have no patience with such revelations to our friends."

"I suspect those highway scenes are touched up with what father calls local color," says Cissy, with something of her former sprightliness.

"Mrs. Kenrick has long been of opinion that the career of her husband is a very remarkable chapter in biographical and general history," I say.

"Pray do not quote that any more, Christopher; I have been too often reminded of my folly."

"Oh, by the way," says Bess, suddenly, "why do you call our mother 'Sarah' in your chapter by the way?"

"Do I call her Sarah?"

"Yes, indeed you do."

"Perhaps it was a slip of the pen," I say; "perhaps it was a weak device to baffle the reader. Thackeray often miscalled his characters; I think he mentioned the circumstance in a 'Roundabout.' It is a common thing for novelists to forget the names of their heroes and heroines. You should see their proofs, and the queries in them, where one lady is sometimes called by half-a-dozen names; one time Sarah, then Esther, then Susan, then Julia."

"How absurd!" says Cissy; "fancy an author forgetting his heroine's name!"

"Perhaps I did not forget Mrs. Kenrick's name," I reply.

"I am very glad if you did, Christopher," says

Mrs. Kenrick. "I wish you had forgotten all our names, and indeed you should not have written the story at all, if I had known what it would be."

"I will not deceive you, ladies and gentlemen; this is no story of exciting adventures, of moving accident by flood and field, of most disastrous chances," I say, nodding pleasantly at Mrs. Kenrick.

"I believe you have committed your own preface to memory for the purpose of quoting it to annoy me," says the lady.

"I will a round unvarnished tale deliver of my whole course of love," I reply.

"For goodness' sake, Christopher, be quiet," she says.

"You *must* have suffered those sad chances in the battle, as you call it," says Cissy, with an expression of sympathy and sorrow.

"In the way of a cordial and truthful narrative I find some formidable difficulties," I say, still quoting and looking at my wife. "Amongst the chiefest is the fear of wounding Mrs. Kenrick's pride, and lowering the dignity of my family."

"You silly old goose!" exclaims my wife, giving me a hearty kiss, and laughing at Bess.

"I am sure I cried heartily over that chapter in which the hero (I will say the hero, not father) fears he will go mad, and wonders if Esther is true to him."

"There is a stroke of true genius in that bit of description," says Bess.

"Thank you, my dear," I reply with mock solemnity.

"That picture story is something like the case which has just occurred at Worcester, where a working man bought a painting for six pounds, and sold it for seven hundred guineas."

"It is a little like, Bess; only that poor Abel Crockford has not yet sold his picture in our story, and the one is a Proccacini, whilst the other is supposed to be a Velasquez."

"If that in your study at home is not Abel Crockford's picture, I am a Dutchman, as Father Ellis says," Bess replies.

"Hush, Bess; don't let us anticipate, as the liners sometimes say; you are disturbing a future incident of my story. There was a case, some years ago, where a Reading tradesman thought he had made his fortune by the purchase of a picture at a low price. He was offered a thousand pounds for it. Judges in art said it was the lost Velasquez. The Reading man refused a thousand pounds for his prize, sold his business, and took his picture to London, where he exhibited it. The work did not prove a sufficient attraction to sight-seers, and the picture was seized for the rent of the room in which it was exhibited. In the middle of the night the poor Reading man got through the window, cut the picture out of the frame, rolled it up, made off with it, and exhibited it in another part of London. Finally,

the man went mad and died, and his picture was sold by auction for fifty pounds."

"I hope you told Abel that story," says Bess.

"I did."

"And I can guess what became of his picture."

"Then don't," I reply.

"And have you still more troubles for your hero?" asks Mrs. Kenrick.

"He comes to terrible grief in the next few chapters; but the sun will shine by and by," I reply.

"Have you any manuscript in hand?" asks Bess.

"I have."

"Then instead of a good chat, I propose that father reads us a further instalment of his life and adventures."

"Yes, yes; I second the proposition," says Cissy.

"Content," I say; "that is, if Mrs Kenrick's silence may be construed into assent, and on one condition—I must not be interrupted, or asked to make alterations in the text."

"Agreed," says Bess.

I look for some reply from my wife. She only nods her head, and says, "Go on, Christopher;" whereupon I read to my family critics the following chapters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONCE MORE AT STONY-HEARTED STONEYFIELD.

It was not until the next day that I reached Stoneyfield. I journeyed thither partly by train and partly on foot. The latter part of the way I chose to walk, and the familiar country smiled upon me, in the early morning, as I neared the old town.

Nearly five years had elapsed since that little fellow with his little bundle stood and looked up at his father's house and bade it good-bye in the autumn mist.

It had seemed to me like fifty years instead of five; but now as I approached my native town once more the past was like a dream, as if I had never really run away at all.

The spring sunshine was lighting up the fields and hedgerows, and flashing on the brooks and ponds of the well-known country round Stoneyfield. Here and there black patches of coal-land with small mountains of fuel and pit-gearing disfigured the landscape; but these only made the green fields seem all the greener and the lark's song more fresh and welcome. How bright and sunny and radiant, how hopeful and sweetly-scented that morning was

I shall never forget. And yet it is a black, bitter day in my memory, a dark dismal day, with a pall in it and a funeral bell. The trees were putting forth new buds, and all the colors of autumn shone out in the bursting leaves, all the colors of autumn touched with the fresh beauty of Spring. They seemed to welcome me back again, the giants of the neighboring woods stretching out their arms to me like old friends; and I met on the highway two farmers whose faces I knew. Nearer still to Stoneyfield I encountered several factory women going to their work, and I passed a group of pitmen who had been in the bowels of the earth all night. One of them had plucked a handful of primroses; the others were carrying pieces of wood and coal. They were all lively and merry, and so was I until I stood upon a hill and saw the town in the distance; and then all the old heart-break came back. All my persecutions, all the little indignities I had suffered made themselves into a small army and marched in procession before me. The dirty-red houses stood up in the early smoke of tall chimneys, and the harsh church-bell tolled out the hour. My heart sank within me. I was hopeful no longer. That dream with my mother's sad voice in it came up in my memory—"And I love him, too." The words, and the sad, sad tone in which they were repeated, were in my mind. I seemed suddenly to remember all the tender things which my mother had said to me in childhood. I saw myself by her knee, I heard

her singing "Robin Adair" in a sweet soft voice. And it came into my mind that I should see her no more.

I walked on until I entered the town. It seemed to me to be smaller and dirtier and more contemptible than ever. I loathed it, and yet how I loved those trees and brooks and meadows beyond the rock of the Stoneyfield chimneys! When I came to my father's house, it was eight o'clock. The shop was open. The same old books and pictures, the same miscellaneous things, the same small panes, the same counters, the same desks, the same stool, the same chairs, nothing altered except that old man who was opening his morning letters.

I went boldly in and stood before him.

"Who are you?" said the stern voice of the old man, who raised his eyes from the desk.

"Your son, sir," I replied, calmly.

"You are no son of mine," said my father, showing a pale, wrinkled face.

I noticed in a vague, blank sort of fashion that his hair was very gray, and that he was dressed all in black.

"I say you are no son of mine," the same stern voice repeated.

"Would that I were, then!" I said in a penitent voice; "I have suffered very much."

"You have chosen your own way—walk in it," said my father.

"I came to ask your forgiveness, and my mother's,"

I replied; and I trembled when the soft, kindly word, mother, escaped my lips.

"Your mother is dead," said my father, with solemn deliberation; "dead and buried! God rest her soul!"

I staggered for a moment under this terribly hard blow; but somehow I knew that she was dead when I saw his gray hair and black clothes; and it had been in my mind long before that I should never see her again. It was a hard, sudden blow, nevertheless, to be told of her death in this cold, bitter spirit, and my heart was steeled against my father. Recovering myself, I returned his calm gaze with a glance of defiance.

"And is this the way in which you tell her son that she is dead?"

"You broke her heart," said my father.

"Oh, no, no, no!" I exclaim; "that is cruel, very cruel."

"She talked of no one but you when she was dying."

"God bless her!" I said.

"She pined after you in secret."

"My poor mother!" I said.

"You must be punished for your ingratitude."

"I am punished: I am a miserable outcast!" I said, all my fine resolutions of firmness and defiance breaking down.

"Have you anything more to say?" my father asked; "I have business to attend to."

"Father," I began, intending to make a penitent, dutiful, and affectionate speech, if only out of respect to my mother's memory; but the old man cut me short.

"Don't 'father' me; you are no son of mine, I tell you."

I bowed my head and left the place, and walked on through the smoky town with a benumbed sensation about my heart that seemed to make me impervious to all sense of sight or feeling. I walked on and on. I was not in pain. There were no tears in my eyes, no choking sensation in my throat. I was like an automaton, with legs and arms and no heart, no mind, no brain, no pulse. How long I remained in this condition I know not even now; but for a time I must have lost my senses, and it was long before they all came back again. Far in the afternoon I found myself sitting on a high-road with several people round me.

"He's been in a fit," said one.

"Nowt of the sort," said another, "he's nobbut had a drop too much, I wouldna moind being in a fit of that sort ivery day of my loif."

"The young man is not well," said a kindlier voice, "he will be better soon, don't crowd about him."

"What is the matter?" I said, looking round in astonishment.

"Ah, thot's what we want to knaw; thou's been getting drunk, young whipper-snapper," said a rough-

looking fellow, one of the Stoneyfield gamins, of that class whom I had had to fight at every street corner when I was a boy.

I leaped upon him like a tiger, and gripped his throat with a deadly clutch; but the people parted us. I could have murdered him; for I felt just then that Stoneyfield had murdered me.

"Oh, what a vixen!" said a woman.

"The brute!" said another.

"Gie him a dommed good hiding," said a cockney-looking boy to the one whom I had seized so suddenly.

"Who'll do it?" I said, shaking off the man who had held me by the arm, planting my left foot firmly down and clenching my fists, ready to revenge all the insults and cruelties I had suffered in Stoneyfield upon the first comer.

At this moment there arrived upon the scene a lady and gentleman who had evidently been out for an afternoon walk. A dog was leaping on in front, and the group about me was thus increased.

"What's going on here?" said the gentleman, adjusting a pair of light spectacles.

"Ho, ho, ho, haw, haw!" exclaimed the lively youth, who had suggested that I should receive a good hiding, "he wants to put it i' the paper."

"Silence, you brute!" exclaimed the gentleman.

"Ho, ho, haw, haw!" shouted the youth, running off. "Specs, specs, ho, ho!"

The Stoneyfield youth varied his amusement by

throwing a stone at the dog and nearly hitting a woman, whereupon another youth threw a stone at the other youth, and got up a fight with his brother in consequence. During this encounter Mr. Noel Stanton came up to me and said—

"Why, it's Christopher Kenrick."

"Indeed," said his wife (formerly Miss Birt), "and a nice disgrace he is to any one; come along, Stanton."

"What is the matter—can I assist you?" said my old Editor.

"No, thank you, Mr. Stanton," I said.

"You can only assist him to a fight—that seems to be his idea of happiness," said a bystander.

Noel received this remark with an uncomfortable shrug, and I glanced sorrowfully up at my Lindford antagonist. He took me aside, despite his wife, who looked contemptuously at me from a little distance.

"You are in some trouble," said Mr. Stanton. "I am the editor of the *Stoneyfield News*, and the lady who was Miss Birt is my wife: if I can do anything for you, my address is No. 10 Coaldust Crescent."

"Thank you, sir," I said.

"Come, come, Stanton," said his wife.

Stanton plucked up his collars, adjusted his spectacles, offered Mrs. S. his arm, whistled his dog, and went his way.

The little crowd of lookers-on dispersed. I found that I was on the outskirts of the borough, and it was nearly evening.

When it was quite dark I entered a wayside inn, and found lodgings for the night. In the morning I asked how far it was to Lindford.

"Thirty miles," said the host.

"Straight on?" I asked.

"Yes, this is the old coaching road."

"Is there a railway-station near?" I asked.

"Yes, a mile off."

And I started on my way toward Lindford. I do not know why it came into my head to go to Lindford, unless it was that the name was so familiar to me. I hardly thought of Esther, or Mrs. Mitching, or anybody. I did not seem to care for anybody, or for anything. I was too indifferent about myself to take the trouble to commit suicide, or I might, perhaps, have got into a river, or thrown myself down a pit. I trudged along the road in a mopish, apathetic, careless way, until I was faint with hunger, and then I bought some bread at a village, and went on again until night, when I entered another inn, and obtained a lodging.

It was an old-fashioned bedroom, this second one in which I slept on my way to Lindford, and there was a picture of "Our Saviour Blessing Little Children" on the wall. That beautiful story of the Man of Sorrows had always touched me in my youth, and the sight of the picture struck a tender chord in my heart. I fell upon my knees for the first time since I had heard of my mother's death. All my own sufferings at once paled before the memory of the

Master's sorrow. If I had been rejected, if my heart had been seared, how had Christ suffered, and with what sublime magnanimity had He borne His cross! Who was I that I should complain and curse my wretched fate? I prayed earnestly that God would forgive me my sins, and guide me in this my hour of tribulation. As I prayed I came to myself again. That dull, apathetic numbness about my heart softened, and I saw my mother's face and heard the gentle words of my dream, "I do love him, I do love him." Then I thought of Esther, and wondered in my heart if God would reward me for all I had suffered by bringing us two together at the last.

What strange dreams I had that night, varied by terror and happiness, struggles with demons, and rescues by angels! I must have slept well at last, for I did not wake until nearly eleven o'clock, and I felt something like my old self again; but still sad and weary and anxious, fearful about the future, and sorry for the past.

I had only twopence after I had paid for my bed; so I took no breakfast, but spent the whole of my capital in bread at the next village, and walked on as fast as I could, hoping to reach Lindford at night, but quite uncertain about what I should do when I got there.

Oh, what misery might have been spared to him and to me, if my father had only relented for one moment in his manner toward me! I learnt in

after-years that cold and harsh and cruel as he had seemed to me, there was a soft corner in his heart, where some of the true paternal nature still nourished a fond thought of the wayward son. My father's was one of those strange natures which is ever crying, "justice," "duty," "obedience," and which lays its heavy hand at once upon any who fall away from the hard, beaten path of principle and duty. "Honor thy father and thy mother," my father had laid down as the one command for his son; obedience, strict, severe obedience, no frivolity, no boyish waywardness. I broke down under the discipline, and it was right, according to my father's theory, that I should be punished. There came a day when he was sorry for me, nevertheless. The more the pity that he thrust back his better nature when the penitent son was ready to throw himself at his feet.

Fathers, be generous as well as just to your children. A tender word now and then to that boy in the Stoneyfield printing-office, would have made him as happy as the Prince in the fairy tale.

Some little consideration for the bent of Christopher Kenrick's genius would have made that old shop, with its old-world books and songs, a paradise. Even Stoneyfield might have been endeared to his memory had justice been tempered with generosity, and paternal discipline softened with paternal tenderness. Kind fathers make kind sons. When they do not, then is the son accursed; let his sins be

upon his own head. I can say this honestly and fearlessly, though I did run away from home; for the memory of those sufferings of my early youth has in it a pang of bitterness even in my latter days. I can look back and pity my own poor little self with the pity of a man who has suffered and is strong.

This by the way.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I AM PENNILESS AND HUNGRY.

I MUST have lost my way, for at nightfall, when I inquired how far it was to Lindford, I had still eight miles to go. I crept into an out-house where there was some straw, and slept the sleep of the weary and hungry. It has often occurred to me since then that I might have been locked up under the vagrant laws, for "wandering abroad without any visible means of subsistence." What would they have done with me, the justices? Perhaps some blundering, hard-hearted idiot might have sent me to jail. Christopher Kenrick, Esquire, of Hallow, gentleman, author, artist, and J. P., might have been condemned to a week's imprisonment, as a vagrant, for being penniless and houseless. That crime is terrible in the eyes of some of my own brother magistrates. The Rev. Paul Felton (who is just now appointed to the commission of the peace) would have given me a month. Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes, an empty pocket is the worst of crimes. But an empty stomach, too, dear friends, what a terrible thing that is! how it gnaws at your heart-strings, and twists all your better feelings into hard, bitter knots!

I got up in the morning, and happily sneaked out into the highway before Mister Farmer found me on his straw; and out on the highway I felt so pitifully hungry and wretched, that I nearly came to begging some bread at a cottage. The blood of all the Kenricks revolted at the notion; but it was rather a weak revolt, it only crimsoned my cheek for a moment, and then rushed back to my heart like a half-starved garrison retreating after an unsuccessful sortie.

Here was I, the son of a well-to-do father, the heir to an honorable race of men and women, a young man of literary promise, a proficient reporter, a musician, something of an artist, and one who could be husband to a beautiful rich lady—here was I, this accomplished gentleman, starving; yes, sir, literally starving. I say it fearlessly, howsoever much my family may now blush at the declaration. I did not beg, but I very heartily wished I had my fiddle that I might play a tune by the way, and see if any one would pay the minstrel for his melody. "Oliver Goldsmith, the beloved of all men, travelled throughout Europe," I thought, "and paid his way with flute melodies; why should not I, Christopher Kenrick, fiddle my way to Lindford?" I was in a weakly satirical mood, and tried to think how much a roadside cottage would pay for "Robin Adair," and what an ancient set of quadrilles would bring at a public-house, where a jolly farmer was watering his horse and quaffing a jug of ale.

Oh, but it was heart-breaking work, and by the time that I had walked about four miles, I began to think I should faint by the way and die. I paused to rest near a quiet bend in the road: and my eyes fell with a soothing, gentle kind of impulse upon the green lawn of an old country-house; my eyes rested on the grass, and then wandered, with ivy and spring rose-buds, up the sides of the house, and away amongst its old gables, in which a small flock of birds were secretly building their nests. What a quiet, retiring kind-looking old place it was, with white blinds and half-open windows, with stunted smoking chimneys, with trees peeping over lichen-covered roofs, with spring breezes wandering about it, and moving the blinds as they went in and out of the little diamond-paned windows! "If I had only my violin," I thought, "I would play 'Robin Adair' to this kind-looking house." "Sing it," said my poor, empty stomach; "sing it, Kenrick, and they'll give you sixpence; there is a village beyond, with bread and cheese for sale." Again the blood of the Kenricks struggled into my cheeks; but I was very hungry.

Pulling my hair about my forehead, slouching my hat over my eyes, buttoning my collar up round my throat, and assuming an awkward gait, that I might thus disguise my person, I pushed the gate aside, stood nervously upon the green lawn, and began to sing. I remember hearing a weak, trembling, hollow voice sing or say, "What's this dull world to me?"

and that is all. I must have fainted, as I had feared I should, from sheer weakness and hunger. When I came to myself, I was sitting in an easy-chair in a comfortable little room. A mild, soft-eyed, middle-aged lady was by my side. On the table there was wine and meat. I stammered out all sorts of apologies. The lady begged me to eat and drink, and I did so with an eagerness that I was ashamed of.

This was at once one of the darkest and brightest hours of my life. Who says Fate guides us not to our fortunes? Who says a merciful Providence doth not stoop sometimes to put a poor mortal in the way that shall lead him to happiness? It was a lucky nook that green wayside retreat; it is still a bright spot in my memory, on that dark road from Harbourford to Lindford. Heaven knows, it was high time some gleam of sunshine should light on me! As I left that old house I saw—whom do you think, ascending the staircase, whom do you think? For a moment I nearly shouted with joy. Just as I was passing through the hall a voice that I knew startled me. I looked up and behold there was my darling on the stairs, leading a child by the hand. There she was, my blue-eyed, round-faced, graceful, gentle Esther. I bent my head, and put on my ugly gait. She did not know me, but I caught a glance of her eye, and it went straight to my heart.

Once more in the road, and on my way, I wondered why Esther was here. "She has married

Mr. Howard," said a miserable, sneaking whisper, for a moment; but I denounced it as false and wicked. For all that, I stopped a butcher boy on his way to the house.

"Who lives there?" I asked.

"Lady Somerfield," said the boy.

"Do you know the young lady there?" I said, with cunning deference.

"What, her with the blue eyes and soft voice?"

"Yes, yes," I said, cheerily.

"Should think I do!"

"Do you know her name?"

"Yes, I know her name."

"What is it, sir?" I asked, with eagerness, but still deferentially.

"Miss Wilton."

"God bless you, God bless you!" I shouted; dashing into his hand one of Lady Somerfield's two half-crowns (which she had slipped into my pocket), and nearly shaking his arm off.

How strong I felt! I could have hugged that butcher boy, and carried him in my arms.

"Good-bye, good-bye," I said, waving my hand to the astonished youth.

How my thoughts rattled on! "Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more?" I said aloud. "Now, Kenrick, be brave, there is luck in that wayside house; be brave, and you will conquer yet!"

I thought how with the first half-sovereign I got I would buy a present for Lady Somerfield, to wipe out

the stigma of alms. Was that mean or high-spirited, generous, proud, or what? I cannot decide even now.

"What is Esther in that house," I wondered; "governess or companion? Has she rebelled against the undue influence of Emmy, with regard to Mr. Howard, and left her home? Has she been forced to go out to earn her own living, because she won't marry the rich suitor? Is she still true to Christopher Kenrick? My heart said she was, and my memory endorsed the affirmation with a thousand treasured confessions of the Lindford maiden. "They made me do it. I do love you." Dear, faithful, true, loving words, my heart set them to a sweet tune, and I sang them all the way to Lindford.

It was borne in upon me that the turning point in my fortunes had come, and it was so; but there was a hard, rugged road still to be mastered. I cared not for that, if there was a reasonable hope at last of reaching that goal, whence Esther and I might go on hand in hand together for the remainder of life's journey.

Lindford looked bright and cheerful as I entered it that evening on foot. None of those bitter memories which crowded on me at Stoneyfield, broke in upon the welcome which the old city seemed to give me. Crossing the common where I had walked with the girl in the lama frock, I stopped to watch the sun setting upon the fine old cathedral, and tinging the waters of the quiet peaceful river upon which Esther

and I had sailed amongst the weeds and rushes, gathering water-lilies and making love.

The shops were all open and the gas was lighted. I stopped to peep in at Mitching's and think of the past. My dress was travel-stained, or I should have entered at once. The windows did not look so well filled as of yore. The shop was not so neat as usual; but there was the old smell of Russia leather, a perfume which to this day always conjures up in my mind the picture of that famous shop, with a runaway boy peering in at the door.

From this point I went straight to Mrs. Nixon's. She came to the door herself, with a candle in her hand, the usual rainbow in her cap, the old pin in her eye (it represented a clever ophthalmic operation, that pin), and her accustomary self-assertion of manner, which made her at once the terror and envy of her neighbors.

"Who is it?" she said, after a short pause. "I know the face."

"Christopher Kenrick," I said. If my fortunes had not been so low I should have said Mr. Kenrick, and effected an entrance at once. As it was, I hesitated on the doorstep, and said, "Christopher Kenrick; and I hope you are well, Mrs. Nixon."

"Yes. Well as times go, thank you. Come in: don't stand there."

In former days she would have said, "Come in, sir," and been as obsequious as a due sense of her own importance would have permitted; but she

could see at once that I was not a flourishing member of society, and she treated me accordingly.

"Why, Lor bless us! how thin and pale you've got!" she said, when we were within that little back room which Tom Folgate and I called the spider's den. She used to sit there and spin her webs, we said, and dart out upon poor flies, who were attracted by the notice of "Genteel apartments, with attendance."

"Can I have a bedroom, Mrs. Nixon?" I said; "I am not very well off; but I can pay for my lodgings."

"You always did pay me," she said in a patronizing way; "and I will trust to your honor again, though it is more than I can say of some people as was grander in their ideas and stuck up. Where have you left your luggage?"

"I have none; at least none of any importance; and I have walked some distance on foot," I said.

"Have you got no change of things?"

I felt myself getting angry at these questions; but I controlled my feelings sufficiently to reply calmly and courteously.

"I have not. If you object to let me have a room, Mrs. Nixon, I must go elsewhere."

"Object! not I, indeed. We've all gotten our ups and downs; and I was only thinking as when you went away you left a waistcoat, a shirt, and some collars behind. People that has been in the habit of letting lodgings regular, would have considered them perquisites; but when you go up to your room, I'll lay them on the bed for you, and you

can testify to the difference between professed lodgings and them as is brought up in a higher state of life. Next year I shall go out to my husband in America, and have done with lodgings. I'll light you up stairs; and perhaps you would like a cup of tea?"

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Nixon," I said. "This is, indeed, kind. Has Mr. Folgate left you?"

I began to feel anxious about things that had happened during my absence from Lindford.

"Lor bless you! Left me? He's bin gone from Lindford this many a month—eighteen, at least; and didn't you know?"

"I thought he might have gone to Russia," I said, "but I did not know."

"Ah, deary me!" she said, tossing up her rainbow ribbons, and nodding her head at the ceiling; "it's a queer story—a very queer story."

"I know little or nothing of Lindford since I left it," I said, encouragingly. "I shall be glad to hear all the news."

"I'll tell you all I know," said Mrs. Nixon, "when you come down—ah, deary me! Lor bless us!"

It was my old bedroom. That was kind and considerate. If Mrs. Nixon had treated me with more personal respect I should positively have liked her. I drew aside the window-blind to look at Esther Wilton's dear house. There were lights in all the other windows but in these. By the glimmer of an adjacent gas-lamp I could see that the house

was shut up, and "To Let" written upon it. I closed the blind with a sigh, and picked up my old waistcoat and the other things which Mrs. Nixon kept for me. How familiar they looked! Esther had lain her dear head once upon that waistcoat. I kissed the place where her brown sunny hair had been, and when I descended the stairs in that well-remembered garment (it was a black velvet with tiny gray spots upon it), I felt as though Esther's dear hand was upon me.

"In the first place, Mr. Folgate owes me seven pounds fourteen shillings and twopence halfpenny," said Mrs. Nixon, after tea; "and I 'spose that's gone for good, and that's not a comfortable thing to have on your mind; but, however, thank goodness, I can get over it. And didn't you know as he had eloped?"

"Eloped!" I exclaimed, thinking to myself—"and that is why Wilton's house is to let, Emmy and Tom have eloped!"

"Yes! Lor, the fluster and noise as it caused in Lindford! First, Mr. Folgate was missing, and then Mrs. Mitching."

"Mrs. Mitching!" I said.

"Mrs. Mitching," she said, as though she revelled in the name,—"Mrs. Mitching."

I did not understand what the woman meant.

"They went separately, and met at Liverpool, where they was followed to by the police, but without no effect."

"Tom Folgate eloped with Mrs. Mitching?"

"Lor bless us! Yes; it was in all the papers."

"Then, that was what Fitzwalton fancied I knew, and which he would not repeat."

"Fitzwalton! that's him as was the brother-in-law of the young lady that Mr. Stanton married; and wasn't it a wedding! Deary me! why all Lindford was there. And to see the bridegroom a-wiping his glasses, and pulling his collars up every minute! If it wasn't as good as a play I never see one."

Mrs. Nixon laughed heartily, and flourished her capstrings at the remembrance of this wedding scene.

"And to see the lady a-looking round, as if all the men in the church was envying the gentleman in the collars! Well, it was fun, though she was a pretty girl for all that, and a nice, pleasant face, which might have done better than take up with a newspaper fellar—begging your pardon for once, Mr. Kenrick, as you know I always thought higher of you than the common run of such people."

It was deftly done, and clever of Mrs. Nixon, to call me "Mister Kenrick" at this juncture, though I was too much interested in what she was telling me to care whether she put her news to me offensively or not.

"It's been a great break-up, I can assure you. Poor Mitching! He was took ill, and he's gone quite silly, poor man!—quite imbecile; and he's in this very house, under my care, and a melancholy object to see; always a-waiting of his wife, till it

makes a body as has a heart fit to cry, and long to kill that heartless woman. I am not one as is given to weakness, having been so long obliged to make my own way in the world, and knowing what it is; but my heart bleeds for that old man, though it's true an old man shouldn't have married a young, flighty girl. He'd only just gone to sleep when you came in, and he wakes up in the night like a child."

"Terrible news!" I said, "terrible news!" and then I remembered a hundred little circumstances which indicated something more than mere friendship between that pretty, fascinating little woman and Tom Folgate. Before I could ask a question about Emmy Wilton, Mrs. Nixon, who seemed to relish her narrative, dashed on into further details. The bearer of news, bad or ill, usually takes a portion of the importance of his tidings unto himself. Mrs. Nixon seemed to swell with oracular power. Her eyes flashed, her cheeks were red with excitement, her ribbons were in a perpetual flutter; and she awed me with the vastness of her gossip.

"Knowing as that affair between you and the youngest is put off, and as none of the others cares a button about you, it won't grieve you much to know as the Wiltons was not long in coming down from their stuck-uppishism. Them two megs—poor squinchy things! with their noses up in the air and their gowns in the mud!—one on 'em is keeping a school, and the other is living on the bit and sup as the mother has got left to her. It's a mercy as you

didn't carry on your notion of marrying into that family, which is always burning the candle at both ends; but that married brother got the best of 'em at last, and burnt his end right up to within an inch of the other; so they had to sell up and go away, and the old woman is living in a little house at Fleetborough."

Whilst Mrs. Nixon took breath I asked, with as much unconcern as I could assume, what became of Miss Esther.

"She's companion, or something, at Lady Somerfield's, a few miles off, as the late Lord S. he knew her father; they lived on his estate, I think. It's a nice child, Esther, if it was not for the family, and good-looking enough; but a bit dollish. They say as young Squire Howard made her an offer, but it's the pride of that Emmy to say so, because, of course, she'd have jumped at him if he had. It was a fall for Miss Emmy, that 'lopement of Mr. Folgate; but pride always has its falls, and I never stopped saying as the Wiltons would have theirs."

"And where is Emmy Wilton?"

"Oh, Lor bless you! she braves it out. She's governess at Doctor Sharpe's, Uphill, and struts about as if nothing had happened, as proud as Lucifer, and cuts the megs, I'm told—though I admires her spirit for that."

Such was the melancholy news upon which I went to bed that first night of my return to Lindford.

How rapidly events had developed themselves! The occurrences at Lindford, for the time, thrust the miseries I had endured during the last few days out of my thoughts. Even my dead mother, and that terrible encounter in my father's house, were pushed aside by those two desolate houses: that one in the High Street, and the other over the way, with "To Let" upon it. The disparity of the age of Mitching and his wife had struck me, boy as I was, when first I saw the lady on that memorable day when Mr. Mitching announced to me, in presence of his charming wife, that I should give them the benefit of my experience in the art of printing and publishing on the morrow. What a pretty, piquant, swan-like little fairy the woman was! Then I remembered that famous party, and how I sat in the church-porch, and heard a voice say "Good-bye, dear;" then I remembered how the lady had spoken to me of Tom and Emmy Wilton; and I could not help thinking how short-sighted I must have been in those days. Poor old Mitching! his young wife was the idol of his life; and, now that it was broken, no wonder his weak little brain was turned. Dear, pompous old gentleman, with his gold-rimmers, I shall never forget him as he used to stand, making speeches at me, and believing himself to be an orator, with the sweetest and dearest and prettiest little wife in creation.

I put out my candle and looked over the way, and

thought of the Wiltons. I could hardly realize all the changes that had taken place. I forgave Emmy for her unkindness to me. My heart ached for her. "They made me do it." Surely Tom Folgate had not helped Emmy to believe that I had behaved badly in visiting Julia Belmont! I had often thought that something might come between Emmy and Tom to prevent their marriage. That Mrs. Mitching would be the evil genius of Emmy's life I never dreamed. Tom, somehow, did not believe in Emmy. Perhaps it was because he did not believe in himself. He never trusted her implicitly, and he never trusted himself. Emmy, like a young woman of the world, no doubt tried to hurry on the engagement into matrimony. Whether she used more than the customary arts of the sex, I know not. I think Tom might have been conquered by loving, gentle, tender wiles; but Emmy was proud, and a trifle worldly. And what was Tom Folgate? Passion's slave! A wayward, uncertain fellow, without moral ballast, and yet one of those manly-looking, outspoken, hot-headed, generous-seeming men whom men like, and whom women admire. I used to love Tom Folgate. I had a sneaking affection for him, notwithstanding that elopement; but he behaved like a villain, and he has two blighted lives to answer for. So far as Mrs. Mitching is concerned, she made as much love to Tom as he made to her. Her sin be upon her own head. But poor Mitching and

Emmy Wilton, Tom Folgate blasted their lives entirely.

What a break-up it was! It seemed to me as if I was an old man in sorrow. What experiences I had had! None so young, I thought, could have seen the way strewn with so many wrecked hopes. And yet the moon, "like a silver bow bent in heaven," shone out serenely as I stood at the window contemplating that sign of misery, "To Let." I watched it sailing on with a bright sentinel star in company. I watched it calmly pass over the spot where the river slipped away through the meadows. I watched it glimmer upon the red roofs of the High Street. I watched it shine on that white, ghost-like board over the way, and I spelt out the letters once more, "To Let." Then I thought of the sad house at Stoneyfield, and the churchyard; and a silent, prayerful hope escaped my lips, that God would turn my father's heart toward me. I saw my mother's pale face in that Harbourford dream, and heard her poor, broken voice. "O moon!" I said, "what a bitter lot is mine!" The "pale queen" only sailed on with her attendant star; but there was something hopeful, nevertheless, in the clear bright night. Perhaps Esther, I thought, is looking out into the moonlight; and I stood in fancy by her side with the moonbeams tenderly clasping her dear lithe figure, the ivy of that old manor-house rustling in the low, murmuring breeze. "I will be true to

thee, Esther," I said aloud; and I repeated over and over again those dear words in pencil, "They made me do it. I do love you."

I closed the window at last. Soon afterward the moon shone into the room, as if it had heard my complaint, and was sorry for me.

CHAPTER XXV.

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY.

At various periods of my life I have attempted to keep a diary; but chiefly at those times when the tenor of my way has been broken in upon by startling and important incidents — startling and important to me as affecting my own career.

For some time, commencing immediately after Mrs. Nixon's extraordinary narrative, I made a series of notes in my common-place book, from which I transcribe the following extracts.

May 2.—This day I saw a touching and pitiful sight. I had been out in the morning, and returned to dinner. Coming to Mrs. Nixon's house, saw an old man hiding round the corner. He peeped about, to see if he was being watched. Then came out Mrs. Nixon, making a sign to me to notice what would occur. With a great show of mock caution she peered round the corner, and then the old man got cunningly behind the yard door. It was poor Mitching!—that self-same George Mitching, Esq., who used to pin me down with his gold-rimmers; that same tender, confiding old gentleman, who told me it was a proud and blessed thing for any one to

win the esteem and good opinion of Mrs. Mitching. He was a poor, foolish imbecile now; he spent half his time in pretending to run away and hide from Mrs. Nixon, and the other half in asking when Mrs. Mitching would come back. "She is a very long time," he said, in a complaining voice, when he came into the house. "I do wish she would come. We will give a grand party when she does come." He looked at me in a maudlin, silly fashion through the same heavy glasses that he had always worn, but he did not know me. It made my heart ache to see him. . . . . I must leave these lodgings; the sight of poor old Mitching is a perpetual torture to me. "Out of doubt, Antipholis is mad."

May 3.—Met Cator Manners, manager of the Lindford Theatre. Condoled with me; lent me a sovereign, and engaged me as prompter at the splendid salary of one pound a week, "until I can better myself." I am to assist Mr. Manners in his correspondence (he has three other theatres besides Lindford), and make myself generally useful. Have written to Esther at Lady Somerfield's, and put all my heart into it. A court of law would laugh at it. How is it that people laugh at love-making? Surely it is the best and purest and noblest impulse of our nature. For my own part, there is nothing that I would not do for Esther Wilton. My enthusiasm, in this respect, is redoubled since I permitted those mercenary ideas about Julia Belmont to creep into my mind. If I had never seen Esther Wilton, I

wonder if I should have ever been in love with Miss Belmont?

May 4.—Joy! Letter from my dear girl. Very short, very sweet, and the last words are the dear old pencil words over again, "They made me do it. I do love you." I am not to come and see her yet, for reasons which she will explain. She is still my own dear Esther. Hazlitt's maudlin passion for "S." would not have been more satisfied with a tender return than my own true love is with this dear letter. . . . . Abel Crockford sends me an order for two pounds, on account, he says, of the things in his possession. He is a good soul. His picture has been mentioned in a newspaper. *Mem.* Might not an interesting tale be written with Abel for its hero: "The Story of a Picture?" There is much character in Abel Crockford. Wonder what has become of my other stories. Are they bread on the waters? Will they turn up again after many days? And how? through the butterman, or in type, and printed?

May 6.—"More matter for a May morning." This is my lucky month. How strange, in the midst of my speculations about those stray manuscripts, to find that one has been used! After the play, last night, went with Cator Manners to drink whisky at the Shakspeare Inn. Picked up a news paper,—saw, quite accidentally, a quotation from *The Athenian Magazine*, headed, "Fathers and Sons," and at the bottom, "Christopher Kenrick."

I shouted hurrah three times, and then showed the paper to Manners. The extract was from one of the numerous essays which I had written at Crockford's. I made an excuse to leave the Shakspeare as early as possible. I went out into the street, and almost cried for joy. My thoughts seemed to influence my legs; I walked and walked and walked until I was in the country, away from gas-lights, almost unable to control the proud and grateful throbbings of my heart. . . . . I am very successful at the theatre. Wonder if Esther would object to my being an actor. Julia Belmont used to praise my reading. Mrs. Wilton told me that newspaper persons were as bad as theatricals. . . . . *Mem.* To write an essay on "The Stage," and show that the drama represents the highest order of art. Believe this has been done; but no matter, do it again in a fresh, light, trenchant style. What a charming, sweet, delightful *Miranda* Esther would make! with C. K. for *Ferdinand*. "O, most dear mistress!" I could find a real *Caliban* at Stoneyfield, where such devils abound. . . . . Called this day at the *Lindford Herald*. The house is in the hands of a new firm. The editor said the paper would represent "the other side" of politics in future. He talked of the great and glorious liberties of the people; gave me the date of Magna Charta, and declared that, if his pen could influence the course of national events, the new year should clothe in effulgent rays the *undying* splendors of an enlightened and pure gov-

ernment, having its foundations deeply laid in the hearts of a free, unselfish, and independent people. I said, "Good-morning, sir," and wondered, supposing he had ordered me out of his room, if I could have "floored him" as easily as I did Noel Stanton in those past days. Fancy poor, dear "Specs" marrying Miss Birt! I am getting quite brisk and lively. The sun is rising in my heart. There are shadows now and then,—dark ones; but I begin to see the light,—I begin to see the light.

May 8, *Sunday.*—Did not think my clothes were good enough to be seen at church in. I despise myself a little for staying away on this account. Took a long walk, and prayed earnestly and thankfully in the fields, surrounded by the most sublime and beautiful evidences of Divine power. Oh, the beneficent budding Spring! Composed part of a jubilant welcome to the season:—

Joyous, flaunting, tender Spring,
Songs of hope to thee I'll sing:
Waft them, Zephyr, on thy wing,
And whisper Esther's name.

* * * * * * *

Hail! Mother of the flowers,
Dear saint of leafy bowers:
Thy tears are Summer showers,
When blossoms droop and fade.

Shall polish this up "for music" . . . . . This morning got a check for three pounds from *The Athenian Magazine*, with a kind note, saying that the editor desires to hear from me again. *He shall* . . . . .

Mem. To write a supernatural story. I begin to believe in all manner of strange things. I have no doubt my poor mother appeared to me in *that* dream. Her death is what Fitzwalton alluded to in the letter which offended me. Was it not some mysterious power that led me from Harbourford to Lindford, past that manor-house, and showed me my dear Esther . . . . . I have sent to Lady Somerfield, in a feigned handwriting, a beautiful copy of "Quarles," and inscribed it, "From one to whom Lady Somerfield was very kind when the sender was poor and ill, and could not sing 'Robin Adair.'" Poor Kenny! you have had some hard trials, and you have behaved tolerably well under them. There was one of your ancestors who fought the Saracens. He had a long, hard, miserable time of it; but he was a soldier—wore mail and feathers. You are a soldier too, Kenny. "Stand firm!" Remember the grand motto of the Kenricks.

May 10.—Have been too busy to write in my diary; must discontinue it altogether soon. Should like to keep it a little while longer . . . . . Have removed from Nixon's rooms: the sight of poor Mitching unmanned me, and made me unfit for work. Esther is anxious to "tell everything" to Lady Somerfield before I see her, especially as Lady S. seems to have noticed that Esther has had a great many letters lately . . . . . I have worked "like any nigger." Written two papers for *Athenian*, one is accepted; offered my services to almost

every publisher, and got bright prospects of increasing work . . . . . The other night played a little part at the theatre, company being short; everybody complimented me; manager, for some reason, is anxious I should get up in *Claude Melnotte;* am doing so; very tinselly, flashy language, but a fine play for all that; and I confess I like it much . . . . Have written to my father, and sent him the *Athenian.* I hope it will touch him. The more independent I begin to feel in money matters, the more desirous I am that the sun should not go down on my father's wrath: he is an old man. My poor mother—what would she have been like, I wonder, if her own nature had been allowed to develop itself? A kind, considerate gentlewoman, I think; but my father's strong, firm will, entirely neutralized hers. He overawed her with his own severe nature. My mother must have been well brought up. Her father was a clergyman of Stoneyshire . . . . . What on earth could there have been in my boyish conduct to have estranged me so terribly from my parents! If I ever had a son, it would give me the greatest possible delight to see his genius developing, as if in its own kindred soil, amongst Border ballads and fairy tales, amongst books of plays and quaint old essays. I am sure I was not a bad boy; therefore my miseries were undeserved punishments, unless they were to serve some good purpose which an all-wise Power had in view . . . . . I have seen Emmy Wilton. I bought some new clothes, and

called upon her at Dr. Sharpe's. She refused to see me. I called again, and she came into the little fussy drawing-room, into which I was shown. We both looked nervously at each other. I put out my hand, she took it, and burst into tears: burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking. I could not speak for some time. At last I said, "Don't cry, Miss Wilton." I did not know what else to say. By and by, when I had sat down beside her, with a hard portrait of Dr. Sharpe looking fixedly at us, she said:

"Can you forgive me? You know how I have been punished."

"Forgive you? Oh, yes!" I said. "I should never have forgiven you if I had lost Esther; but I have not."

"I tried my best to get her away from you. It was for her own good. I wished to see her rich."

"Pray do not talk of that, Emmy; I was in the wrong, though I did not know it at the time."

"I thought you were, but I was too glad to get an opportunity to advance Mr. Howard's suit. Esther seemed to give way, but she did not, and she would have died first."

"The dear girl!" I said.

"We have all come down, you see, as Mrs. Nixon predicted—the fiend!" said Emmy, having overcome her tears and evidently determined not to give way again. "It is a grand triumph for our enemies; but I don't care for them. You are afraid, I

see, to mention your friend, Tom Folgate; you needn't be. I always doubted him. He was most emphatic, by the way, in denouncing your conduct. I don't think I should have written so strongly to you, had it not been for him."

"And I thought he really loved me," I said.

"He loved nobody," Emmy replied, her eyes flashing. "You think I did not either, but you are mistaken. I did; and I was proud of that man—proud of his strong limbs, proud of his commanding manner, proud of his ability. I should have been true to him to the last, and under all circumstances."

Her voice trembled, and there were very nearly more tears in her eyes. I put my hand tenderly upon her shoulder, and said—

"Emmy, let us be true friends; brother and sister—"

"Not brother and sister!" she exclaimed; "that means hate, not love!"

"Friends, then, Emmy!"

"Yes, friends," she said, and I kissed her.

* * * * * * * *

Strong-minded though she be, that girl will fret her heart out about Tom Folgate. She loved him, and was proud of him. All her hopes centred in him; now her future is as blank as mine would have been if I had lost Esther.

May 14.—An article by Christopher Kenrick on "The Drama," has appeared in the *London Stage* newspaper, and the editor has written to the happy

writer thereof for more "copy." Bright and blessed sunshine! And I am to see Esther at the end of the month. I may write as often as I like. She has "told Lady Somerfield all!" . . . . . Cator Manners tells me he has been talking with the *Lindford Herald* proprietors. They say their editor is a fool, and Mr. Manners has advised them to engage me. "It is very likely they may write to you," he continues; "they know nothing of newspaper work. Builders, by trade, who have been successful, they bought the *Herald* from Mitching's trustees, and some other people have the bookselling business. The editor is a local man, an amateur architect, a political agent, and a conceited and ignorant ass. I shall make you an offer to stick to the stage; but you can do what you think best. I shall only make one condition, and that is, that you play *Melnotte* for me this month, and give me a fortnight's notice whenever you leave." "My dear sir," I said, "there is my hand on it, and I shall forever hold myself your debtor."

May 15.—The proprietors of the *Herald* have made me an offer, and I have given Manners notice. I am to conduct the paper in my own way. It is to be independent in politics. What a rush of good luck! I am worth this day in hard cash, three pounds and ten shillings. I do not owe a farthing in the world. I have got my "fiddle and things," from Harbourford, and returned Abel Crockford his money. To crown all, my father has acknowledged

the receipt of my letter, and commended my article in the *Athenian*. To-night I am really happy. If it were not for those shadows of the past, coming up in black regiments to darken the sunshine, I should be perfectly happy. At the same time, if it were not for these shadows I might not understand what happiness really is. Rochefoucault says "it is a kind of happiness to know to what extent we may be unhappy." I can fully appreciate the deep philosophy of that maxim, and it is equally true that one is happy by comparison with previous or contemplated miseries. "To be good is to be happy," according to one sage, whom I have encountered in books; but that is only a partial truth; to be good and yet be persecuted and misunderstood and thought bad, has something of misery in it . . . . *Mem.* for a sketch or essay. "The Miserable Good and the Happy Bad." An opening for metaphysical discussion. What is good? What is happiness?

May 16.—"Julia Belmont will appear, for one week only, in a round of her famous characters!" The engagement is to begin next week; and Mr. Manners tells me I must play *Claude Melnotte* to her *Pauline*. I reply that it is impossible. He reminds me of our agreement. Why can he be so absurd? I ask. His leading man, I say, would never permit it. That gentleman's engagement, I am informed, will be concluded the night before the "Lady of Lyons" is to be played, which will be the end of Miss Belmont's week. His place will not be filled,

because two stars join at Witham for a month on circuit. I am to be announced as a distinguished amateur, "his first appearance on any stage." Manners cannot think why I can object, is satisfied I shall make a great success, and that this will be an opening for me to a new and splendid career, despite my engagement at the *Herald*. He is satisfied that I shall desert the press for the stage. If it were to play with any one else but Miss Belmont, I tell him, I would not object, and indeed should be glad of an opportunity to test my abilities. The manager is astounded beyond all expression; thought I had a sneaking kindness for the lady; felt he had been doing me a double service; had thought more about me in the matter than himself. . . . . Why am I persecuted by this woman? On second thoughts, am I persecuted? Let me be just to Miss Belmont as well as to myself. If I know anything of such matters, she is in love with me, or I am a vain fellow who ought to be kicked. Women do fall in love with men, and why not Julia Belmont with me? . . . . . Is this a double plot, this "Lady of Lyons" scheme? Did Cator Manners write and tell the lady I was here? Or has she found me out through Abel Crockford? I would not risk the chance of annoying Esther or even Emmy again for all the gold of Peru. By the way, did any one ever see any Peruvian gold? I never did. Oh, this love! My days and nights are days and nights of longing to see Esther, to look into her dear eyes once more,

to hear her sweet voice. Can it be possible that Julia Belmont should feel any such desire about me? Me! A poor, sallow-faced, melancholy beggar such as I am. The idea is absurd; yet I have felt her hand tremble in mine, and seen her eye light up at my presence. *Titania* never saw *Bottom's* long ears and snout when she embraced him. Love is blind. If she do love a miserable wretch like Christopher Kenrick, I pity her. Then why do I not pity Esther? That is different. We are betrothed. We have walked together hand in hand beneath the stars. We have heard the whisperings of that gentle river. We know each other's innermost thoughts. We have sworn in our hearts to be true and faithful ever. . . . . I must be as good as my word with Manners. Shall I tell him all? All? All what? That I think Julia Belmont is in love with me, and I with another? Absurd. Shall I see Emmy and ask her advice? Or Esther? No, I am not to see her until the end of the month. Why not explain myself to Miss Belmont? And be snubbed, perhaps, for my condescension.

May 18.—Have written a silly but honest letter to Julia Belmont, explaining my position with regard to Mr. Cator Manners, but more particularly referring to my unalterable attachment to Esther Wilton. I hope I have done this in such a way that she shall not for a moment imagine that I know her own secret. It is absurd for me to say it even to myself that Julia Belmont is much attached to C. K. She

thinks it was my pride that led me to leave Harbourford; but she is a woman of the world, and able to conquer any wayside passion of this character. At all events, she will understand upon what terms we meet again. . . . . How long the days seem that shut me out from Esther! . . . . Cator Manners has been here, full of chat about Julia Belmont. She has told him many times that she would never marry. Why? Did I not know, he asked? "The bar sinister, my friend, this is the miserable shadow on her life; though hardly a soul knows about it, the legacy recently left to her is the death-gift of a repentant father." Good heavens! I exclaimed. "Bah! what does it matter?" replied the manager. "She is the most noble-hearted girl in the wide world." . . . *Mem.* Delicately treated, this secret of Julia Belmont's would make a fine story; work out the sudden discovery of her misfortune at an important and critical period of her history; and trace the effect of the baneful truth on a highly sensitive and moral nature. Shop again—I am as bad as Falstaff, turning diseases to commodities; but one must labor in one's vocation.

May 23.—Met Miss Belmont at rehearsal. She greeted me most cordially; but I thought she seemed sad. I know she received my silly letter, though she never answered it. I must have appeared confused in my manner. This would be put down to the arduous part of *Claude*, which I had undertaken. Somehow I felt sorry for Miss Bel-

mont, and yet this seemed to be presumptuous. She might marry a score of better fellows than me, if it pleased her. . . . . I was perfect in the words, I did not attempt to act, though we arranged several special points. Cator Manners was delighted; he said I should make a name on the stage, and Miss Belmont praised my histrionic intelligence. . . . . Courtesy compelled me to see the actress to her lodgings after rehearsal. Although she is rich, Miss Belmont has not changed her rooms. It recalled the past in a rush of strange sensations to see that little sitting-room once more. There it was, as of old,—the square piano, the fluffy sofa, the wicker chair, the baize-covered table. Just the slightest attempt had been made to remove the general littery character of the room, but this only seemed to bring out the ordinary features of the place in stronger relief. "I see you remember it," said Miss Belmont, looking round the room as she flung herself carelessly down upon the sofa, with a palpable effort to appear cool and indifferent. "Shall I ever forget it?" I replied. "Yes, yes," she said, suddenly. "You have already forgotten that poor girl in the curl papers, who told you to kiss her hand at parting." Then the great actress, the rich worldly lady, buried her head in the apoplectic pillows of the old chintz sofa, and cried like a disappointed child. The situation was most embarrassing. I kneeled beside her and kissed her hand again. She looked up at me tenderly, like a mother might, and said,

"Don't be angry with me, Kenny, it is all over now; let us be good to each other, and I will try and love Esther Wilton for your sake." . . . . And this woman could take her own part in the great world, fight her own way, and enact tragedy on the stage with almost masculine force.

May 24.—It was a brilliant house, and never did woman look *Pauline* better than Julia Belmont. If my dresser is to be believed, *Claude* was worthy of her. Manners sent a pint of champagne into my dressing-room. I drank it almost at a draught. With an effort of will I threw my whole soul into the part. I *was Claude Melnotte*, and Julia my *Pauline*, my Esther, my love. "Wealth to the mind, wealth to the heart, high thoughts, bright dreams, the hope of fame, the ambition to be worthier Esther." The foot-lights seemed to blaze up into my eyes, the audience was a small sea of faces and colors: I saw nothing distinctly; but I felt the impulse of some hidden power. I was "called" with enthusiasm at the end of the second act, and went on with Miss Belmont; but I saw nothing. Manners came to my dressing-room, and almost wept for joy. "You will be a great man, Kenny." A thrill of sympathy ran through the house as Julia Belmont spoke those tender words to the disguised *Melnotte*, in the last act:

"Tell him, for years I never nursed a thought
That was not his; that on his wandering way,

Daily and nightly, poured a mourner's prayers.
Tell him even now that I would rather share
His lowliest lot,—walk by his side, an outcast;
Work for him, beg with him,—live upon the light
Of one kind smile from him, than wear the crown
The Bourbon lost!"

Great, hot tears rolled down the woman's cheeks as she uttered the speech line by line. They stung me for a moment like daggers; but all my heart was in my eyes with sympathy, when, looking up at me with what I regarded as a strange smile of real resignation, she said—

"Shall I shrink
From him who gave me birth?—withhold my hand,
And see a parent perish? Tell him this,
And say—that we shall meet in heaven!"

The curtain went down amidst thunders of applause. The call for Belmont and *Claude* was tremendous. . . . . Whilst I was dressing to go home, Cator Manners told me it was the largest and most fashionable house he had ever seen in Lindford. "Lord Duffeldt and a party were in the stage box; Sir Manfred Carter was in the dress circle, and Lady Somerfield, with a select party." "Lady Somerfield!" I said. "Yes, and you were too much for one of her lot; a young lady, the prettiest girl I ever saw, nearly fainted, and had to go out into the lobby." I listened with breathless attention now. "I *got* water for her, and when the lady, who went

out with her, turned away for a moment, she asked me in the sweetest way if Christopher Kenrick was not the name of the actor?" "And you said?" I exclaimed. "That it was," he replied. "A curse upon you, Manners," I shouted, hurling the prince's hat and feathers at his feet, "you are my evil genius." . . . I have apologized to Manners; how should he have known any better? And what wrong did he do after all? Why should I shrink at Esther discovering her love in *Melnotte?* But I will send a note by messenger to Lady Somerfield's, and follow me in his footsteps.

It must be done this afternoon. Hark,
The princess comes to hunt here in the park,
And in her train there is a gentle lady;
When tongues speak sweetly, then they name her name,
And Esther they do call her: ask for her;
And to her white hand see thou do commend
This seal'd-up counsel.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRITICISM AND GOSSIP.—A CHAPTER BY THE WAY.

FROM Edinburgh to Durham. The latter is an out-of-the-way city, but picturesque beyond description. By the advice of Bess we have taken it *en route*, and are staying here for a week. We had not been in the place an hour before Father Ellis called upon us.

"What am I doing here? Visiting a brother cleric. Why should I not make holiday as well as other people?" said the reverend gentleman, his eyes sparkling and his cheeks glowing with health.

The Reverend George Ellis is a handsome man. Tall and portly, with gray hair and a white beard, he looks like a patriarch; but there is a youthful twinkle in his eye, and his full, ruddy cheeks have all the glow of robust middle-age. He is not more than forty-five, and yet we treat him as if he were a sage of seventy.

"I am delighted to see you, Father," I say; "you shall clear up for us that point about the blood on the stairs at Holyrood. We are fresh from Edinburgh, and full of historical crotchets."

"Riddle me no historical riddles," says the Fa-

ther, promptly; "I am out for a holiday, I tell you. Let us go and see Finchale Abbey, and talk of Bede."

"Yes, that is the best thing to do," says Bess.

Mrs. Kenrick is out with Cissy. They are at the cathedral service. Bess, the Father, and myself go for a long walk. We are all full of chat and gossip. I never remember the Father being so bright and lively. He called the Rev. Paul Felton a bad name, and said he was to be married that very day. I am thankful there is no prospect of my son Tom encountering him. It would be most reprehensible if Tom should pull his nose; the boy is too impulsive to remember what is due to a clergyman, in respect of his cloth. Tom is in London, preparing for his Indian journey.

In the evening after tea we are quite a happy family party in the northern city, and this is our talk.

Father Ellis. I like the story. It is good, honest work,—no sensationalism, no murders, no bigamy.

Myself. Wait for the end; you do not know what is coming. The subtle novelist may be reserving his blue fire for a grand flare-up at the last.

Father Ellis. Does Mrs. Kenrick still object to the story?

Mrs. Kenrick. Yes; I am paying the penalty of admiring my husband's genius.

Father Ellis. You are afraid the Hallow folk will

not like you so well because C. K. had to fight his own way, and got stained a little with the dust and mud of the battle.

Mrs. Kenrick. My thoughts were for the children, Mr. Ellis. Christopher, in my mind, is too high above the world and its pettiness for me to care what Hallow thinks of him. Hallow and Hallowshire ought to be proud that he condescends to live in the county.

Father Ellis. Bravo! Spoken like a true wife! And Hallow is proud of him, is it not, Miss Bessie?

Bess. I hope so. We are.

Father Ellis. We are, indeed.

Myself. I wish I were worthier your pride. It is pardonable vanity for my wife and children to be proud of me; but I have done nothing, nothing. The standard of excellence, which I raised for myself throughout life, towers up mountains higher than any point I have reached, or ever shall reach. I am content, and therefore happy, as who would not be with a good wife, a reasonable income, and children that are blessings?

Father Ellis. "Happy man be his dole!" I like those extracts from your diary, sir. Genuine, I suppose?

Myself. You are too much of a gentleman, Father Ellis, to doubt my word. If I were to say "No," you would be puzzled; if I said "Yes," you might not be quite satisfied even then.

Cissy (interrupting). I knew they were colored, as

you call it. I told mother so when I found her actually crying over one particular entry.

Mrs. Kenrick. Cissy, dear, do not be so impulsive; you will be as bad as your brother.

Bessie. In your early literary career, father, did you ever meet Thackeray?

Myself. Yes; and he gave me an encouraging word of advice: he was struggling himself in those days. I remember travelling with Etty to York one day after I had been introduced to Thackeray. The author would, I fancy, sooner have been the artist. Etty was telling me how he picked up his model for Joan of Arc. The picture had been waiting for a woman's face, and he encountered the right one accidentally in Westminster Abbey. His niece followed the lady home, found out her address, and Etty painted her by the consent of herself and father, a doctor of London.

Father Ellis. He painted rapidly.

Myself. Very. I once saw him at work.

Cissy. You will tell us something about your art studies, and your successful and happy days? Your troubles seem never-ending.

Myself. Happiness, as a rule, is not interesting in print. The repose of success wants incident.

Cissy. What become of Tom Folgate and Mrs. Mitching?

Myself. Ah, that is a sad story to come.

Mrs. Kenrick. Poor Mitching! I remember seeing him myself, a weak, maudlin old gentleman,

with wandering gray eyes. That woman deserved all the dreadful things which could befall her!

Father Ellis. Not said with your usual charity, Mrs. Kenrick.

Mrs. Kenrick. There are bounds to charity, Mr. Ellis.

Father Ellis. True, true; let us change the subject. Who was it that said Durham looked as if it had been down a coal pit, and had forgotten to wash its face afterward?

Bess. Very good.

Father Ellis. No; I think it was Leigh Hunt, Miss Bess.

Myself. A very weak joke, Father.

Father Ellis. Which? My repartee? I have been taking a lesson from *Happy Thoughts.*

Myself. Unhappy Thoughts would be a good subject,—the melancholy thoughts of a man of genius.

Father Ellis. Omnes ingeniosos melancholicos. You would have him write the work only during his melancholy moments. A good idea. By the way, when you write a story, do you plan it out and arrange all the incidents beforehand?

Myself. Sometimes.

Father Ellis. Your characters master you now and then, and will have their own way; you confess as much in one of your books.

Myself. Indeed? I do not remember it.

Father Ellis. I have heard other novelists say so. It reminds one of Dryden's confession that a rhyme

often helped him to an idea. Somebody says that language, the servant of thought, often becomes its master. I have experienced that in writing sermons.

Mrs. Kenrick. Forgive me for interrupting so interesting a topic, Mr. Ellis, by saying good-night. Don't imagine I wish *you* to go. Christopher is sure to sit up an hour longer yet.

* * * * * * * *

Christopher did sit up an hour longer; in good sooth, he was not in bed until the cathedral bell had tolled out the hour of two in the morning, and all owing to the most astonishing proposition of Father Ellis, which is duly set forth in the following complete note of our conversation, opened, as soon as the women were gone, by my reverend companion.

Father Ellis. Kenrick, we are old friends, and true friends.

Myself. Is that a new discovery?

Father Ellis. I have a plan for bringing us still closer together, or separating us perhaps forever.

Myself. You speak in riddles, Father.

Father Ellis. Call me not Father. I am in no wise entitled to so venerable a distinction, either by age or position; and just now I have no wish for the special honors of age.

Myself. I hope the whisky has not disagreed with you, old friend?

Father Ellis. Nothing has disagreed with me, nor is anything likely to do so under your Mahogany Tree, as Thackeray calls it,—a capital song that, by

the way; one of the Mayhews sung it amongst some friends of mine whom I used to visit in town.

Myself. Indeed; you were quite a buck in your young days, Father.

Father Ellis. No; but I was in a good literary set; have dined often at the Johnson Club, and the Garrick, when it was in its old quarters; knew Thackeray—one of the most charming conversationalists I ever met,—and Macready, whom Forster, of the Guild of Literature and Art set, used to imitate. I once spent a day with Tennyson; I have seen Lord Brougham in a passion; and heard Dizzy talk sarcastically of the Conservative press; I have written for the Quarterlies; and——

Myself. And write still, for that matter; but you had something of special importance to speak about, when you reminded me that we are old friends and true friends.

Father Ellis. I had; and I never in my life found it so difficult to say what I wish to say, and must say.

Myself. Out with it, old friend; I am sure it is nothing that will disgrace the Church or yourself.

Father Ellis. Or you, I hope. It is this, sir: I want your permission to offer my hand to your eldest daughter, Bess.

Myself. What! Why you're drunk, Ellis.

Father Ellis. Not at all, my dear boy; not at all. I'm in love, not in liquor.

Myself. In love! Excuse my laughing, Father. And does Bess know of this?

Father Ellis. She does; we have talked it over any time this twelvemonth.

Myself. Father Ellis, is that right? Ought you not to have spoken to me before?

Father Ellis. I would have done so; but Bess objected. She said you would treat it as a joke; and, by Jupiter, she is right! Not that I see anything to laugh at.

Myself. Well, perhaps there is nothing to laugh at; only it is a very odd notion for Bess and you.

Father Ellis. Why, why, my friend?

Myself. Bess has long been looked upon as the old maid of the family, and you as the Father Confessor.

Father Ellis. Old maid! What call you old? She is only thirty; and I am—well, say ten years older. Why shall we not marry? We can afford it.

Myself. I have no objection, friend; but be sure you know your own mind.

Father Ellis. Nay, Kenrick, do not laugh at me. Our marriage, if it be not a hot love-match, like your own, will be founded in esteem and respect—a union of dear friends, who have confidence and trust in each other, and who will be helpmates and companions in a higher and nobler sense, perhaps, than is generally meant or understood by those who marry in the hey-day of youth.

Myself. I laugh no longer, friend. You have my full permission to offer your hand to Bess, and a father's best wishes and prayers for your happiness.

Father Ellis. My dear Kenrick, I thank you,

heartily. Supposing Bess has really made up her mind, may we fix an early day?

Myself. What do you call an early day?

Father Ellis. This day month.

Myself. Consult the women on that point,—consult the women. Good-night, Ellis, good-night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I HAVE A ROMANTIC AND INTERESTING ADVENTURE.

I MET my messenger returning. He looked woe-begone and miserable. That was, however, nothing new, it was his customary look. It suited my half-serious, half-stagey fancy just then, to associate him with *Gaspar*.

"It reached her, and was returned to me with blows. Dost hear, *Melnotte?* with blows? Death! Are we slaves still, that we are to be thus dealt with, we peasants?"

No, that is not what he said, and I did not re-read my letter in a theatrical attitude.

"I gave the letter to the lady," he said, "and the letter-carrier gave her another at the same time. She was walking with a gentleman."

"Yes, yes," I said, anxiously.

"'Excuse me,' she said to the gentleman as was looking awful sweet upon her; and then she opens yours, and then she opens the 'tother, which last was a long letter, and it took her ever so long to run her pretty eyes through it."

"Well, what then?"

"She says, as she gave me a shilling, she says, 'Tell Mr. Kenrick that I have just heard from Miss Julia Belmont, and I will write to him by post;' and

then she looked at the swell that was walking with her, as much as to say, 'Put that in your pipe and smoke it.'"

"Is that all? What was the gentleman like?"

"Like hisself, I suppose. I thought you might want to know who he was; so I axed."

"You are a good fellow," I said.

"Thankee," replied my messenger; "it was young Squire Howard."

"Thank you, my friend, you may go home now. Call at my lodgings, and say I may not be there again until to-morrow. On your way to the theatre in the morning, see if there are any letters for me. If there are, bring them to yonder public. You see it, just at the bend, past Lady Somerfield's."

"I knows it; all right, sir."

"And I know it too," I said to myself, thinking of that day when, penniless and hungry, I wondered how much it would pay for "Robin Adair."

There must be some mystery here, it seemed to me. Were all my gorgeous plans of happiness once more coming to an ending? Was this visit of Howard to my dear girl the result of last night's business? Perhaps he was at the theatre ready to take advantage of Esther's sudden and just jealousy. I hated Julia Belmont for a moment in my heart then, and it was well for him and for me that Cator Manners was not within ear-shot. Was this fellow Howard at Lady Somerfield's for the purpose of making another proposal for Esther's hand? Was

it all a plot, or what? Had Esther deceived me from the beginning? No; the very thought was an outrage. There could be nothing but truth in those dear eyes that used to look into mine in the old days at Lindford. She had just received a letter from Julia Belmont! What did that mean? There was evidently treachery somewhere. I congratulated myself that an explanation must be close at hand.

I walked on with my troubled thoughts until I came in sight of that ivy-covered house which I had blessed many a time in my prayers. Evening shadows were beginning to fall upon the tender-looking landscape. My first impulse was to walk straight into the house and ask for Miss Wilton. My next impulse, prompted by an unworthy jealous thought, was to act the spy. "And be arrested, perhaps, for trespassing," suggested Caution; "why not bribe the servants?" Opportunely there came out of the house a man who evidently had authority in the servants' hall. He was showing out a brother butler, and he stood at the gate for a few minutes after his friend had gone round the turning in the road.

I did not offer his magnificence of the kitchen a bribe; but when he had strutted back again, I quietly entered the shrubbery and crept close to the drawing-room window, where two people were talking. I recognized the soft voice of one at once; it was Lady Somerfield's.

"I wonder you have not more pride, Howard," said the lady; "your branch of the family belongs to

the tamest of the Somerfield lot, or you would have stood upon your dignity long since. I am very sorry that I ever introduced the girl here. Your eloquence ought not to have conquered my own judgment in the matter."

"I know I am a great fool, Lady Somerfield; but I cannot help it."

"Fool! Your infatuation is simple lunacy. The young lady's coolness is certainly not flattering to you."

"It is that which stimulates my love. I could make any sacrifice for her, and I think my affection would be pure and lasting."

"Romantic youth! And has she refused you again, after last night?"

"I have not yet given her an opportunity of refusing. If these were not such prosy days I would carry her off, my lady; I would compromise her reputation, and then honorably marry her."

"Fie, fie!" said Lady Somerfield.

"You infernal scoundrel!" I said, between my teeth, and it was happiness to me at that moment to think that I might enjoy the blessing of a moment's danger for Esther's sake. That dramatic business of the previous night had got into my brain a little. Oh, to hear Esther cry, "Help! Kenrick, have I no protector?" Would I spare the fellow as *Melnotte* spared *Beauseant?* I clutched a laurel branch and squeezed the leaves almost into pulp.

"It was a cruel device that theatrical business;

but how well the young man played!" said the lady.

"Wretched pleb!" said the gentleman.

"And yet you are in competition with him for this girl, penniless as she is, and without even the pride of blood and position on her side; and I am weak enough to help you in your folly. Cousin, this nonsense must end at once."

"It shall," said the gentleman.

There was another voice now. It was Esther's. How my heart beat! I crept so close to the window that I was nearly in the room.

"Lady Somerfield," said Esther, in a voice trembling with emotion, "I must go home, if you please. I have taken the liberty to order your carriage."

"Indeed, Miss Wilton! What can have happened?" said the lady.

"I have learnt that it was through Mr. Howard that you were so good as to give me a home in your house; you were cognizant of what he is pleased to call his love for me. I despise him! He was mean enough to take part in a weak, silly plot to injure me in the estimation of Mr. Kenrick, and to make me think ill of him. Mr. Howard knew of this performance last night, and was permitted to come to your box in order that Mr. Kenrick might see him with me. Mr. Kenrick was induced to play that part with that lady to confirm my stupid jealousy. I know everything. Here is a letter of explanation from Miss Belmont, who is engaged to be married *to Mr. Cator* Manners."

Esther was quite out of breath with her little speech, and I crept close within the curtains, my heart beating wildly and my brain in a whirl of excitement.

"You interpret events so strangely," said Mr. Howard, a little huskily.

"I fear there is a great deal of truth in Miss Wilton's interpretation of events," said Lady Somerfield, calmly; "and I am very sorry indeed that I am mixed up in so weak and foolish an intrigue. I can only say for my cousin that he has a sincere admiration for you, and would think himself a blessed, happy creature for life if you would consent to marry him. It is true that upon his representations to me, and the late Lord Somerfield knowing and respecting your father, that I was induced to see Mrs. Wilton, and offer you a home here; and I have so high a regard for you, Esther, that I shall be very sorry indeed if you should really leave me."

"I am deeply sensible of your ladyship's kindness," said Esther, "but I should be unjust to myself, to your ladyship, and to another, if I remained here an hour longer."

I was surprised to hear my darling speak with such spirit, and at this moment it was in my mind to rush from my hiding-place and say that I should be unjust to them all if I remained in hiding a moment longer. It would have been a good point to make. I felt half ashamed at being a listener; but what I heard gave me so much happiness that I *would not* interrupt the dialogue.

"Miss Wilton, you have my consent to take your own course. It is ten miles to Fleetborough; you will startle your mother by arriving at ten o'clock at night, and without previous notice."

"Pardon me, Lady Somerfield, I must go; under all the circumstances I think there is no other course open for me."

"Will you permit me to say, Lady Somerfield," said Mr. Howard, "that I am deeply grieved that you should be subject to any annoyance on my account. And I need not assure Miss Wilton that I would not in any way have offended her for the world."

"Thank you, Mr. Howard, I only wish for Lady Somerfield's consent to go home."

"You have it, Esther; but you cannot go alone."

"If Miss Wilton would honor me to that extent, Fleetborough is only a little out of my way, and I could see her home. I should accept her condescension as a token of forgiveness for any unhappiness I may have caused her, and I shall be happy to be the bearer of any message from Lady Somerfield to Mrs. Wilton."

It was the work of a moment. All the subtle, designing cowardliness of that little speech crowded into my understanding. My love for Esther, my joy at her faithfulness, my admiration of her womanly spirit, and my romantic indiscretion hurried me into a rash but dramatic situation. Parting the curtains that hung down over the half-opened

folding windows, I entered the room, and, bowing to Lady Somerfield most respectfully, said—

"Perhaps Miss Wilton would prefer to have me for her companion to Fleetborough."

"Oh, my dear Christopher!" said Esther, throwing herself into my arms, and beginning to sob, all her womanly fortitude giving way when it was no longer needed.

"A very dramatic incident, and prettily done," said Lady Somerfield, with all her calm self-possession.

"Confounded impertinence!" said Mr. Howard, whom I met now face to face for the first time in my life.

He was my own height, a well-looking gentleman of about thirty, with light brown hair, blue eyes, thin, firm lips, and lank, weak whiskers.

"We will settle our little matters of account when there are no ladies present," I said, with a glance of challenge and defiance at Howard.

"Puppy!" said the gentleman.

"Fie!" said Lady Somerfield; "the actor will prove the greater gentleman of the two, cousin, if you are not careful."

Lady Somerfield seemed to enjoy the scene, as if it were a stage rehearsal done specially for her edification.

"We shall meet again," said Mr. Howard, striding out of the room.

"Brava!" said Lady Somerfield, in a sharp, quick way, gently clapping her hands. "Let the drop-scene go down; it is a very effective tableau."

Then putting her hand gently upon Esther's shoulder, she said—

"And now, young lady, between these two lovers we must be careful, or you may find yourself without one at all. You shall not go home to-night. I will take you to your mother's house myself in the morning; and there Mr. Kenrick can meet us. I charge you, sir," turning to me, "not to interfere with my cousin, Mr. Howard. I will be his surety. The age of duelling is over; and we can have no fighting, sir, amongst gentlemen, which does not contemplate gentlemanly weapons."

As she spoke, her ladyship gradually wound her arm round Esther, and separated her from me.

"There, Mr. Kenrick, now we must say adieu, until to-morrow. Mr. Howard will leave the house when you are clear of the neighborhood; and I will pledge you my honor for the safe and happy keeping of Miss Wilton. We shall leave here at eleven in the morning for Fleetborough, where I shall place the lady in the hands of her mother."

"Are you satisfied, Esther?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, looking at me in the kind, loving fashion of our Lindford days.

"Sir, I rely upon you with regard to my deluded cousin Howard," said Lady Somerfield.

"Lady Somerfield, I rely upon you with regard to my dear Miss Wilton, and I offer you my abject apologies for a most uncourteous entrance into your house."

Her ladyship bowed with graceful ease, and smiling her forgiveness, pointed to the open door. I took my leave.

If this had been a mere story for the libraries—a romance of incident, and not a veritable history—I should probably have made Esther Wilton leave Lady Somerfield's that night, in her ladyship's carriage. On the way, Mr. Howard would have attempted to carry her off, and C. K. would suddenly have turned up to rescue her. Or I might have preferred to interrupt the conversation just as I really did, and when I left the house I could have watched it all night, and prevented an attempt at abduction as the bell was tolling the solemn hour of twelve. Better, still, perhaps, in a dramatic sense, I might, during my watch, have witnessed a burglary at Lady Somerfield's, and seized the robber at a critical juncture, only to discover in him one of my early characters in the romance who had gone to the bad. Fancy, for instance, Tom Folgate turned robber! He may come even to worse grief than that.

But this is of course a true history, and I must therefore adhere to the regular course of events. When I had left the house, the sun had gone down,

and it was nearly dark. I hid myself once more amongst the laurels, determining not to leave the place until Mr. Howard had departed. In about an hour a horse was brought to the front door, Mr. Howard got on his back, and in a few minutes I heard the last sound of the animal's clattering hoofs on the hard highway.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THIS DAY SHALL BE A LOVE-DAY."

FLEETBOROUGH is badly named; it is not fleet in any respect. Even its river is slow and lazy, creeping through the town and under the bridges as if there were no sea waiting for it beyond the great, wide marshes. Fleet! nothing is fleet here: even the air is sluggish, and the church-bells are slow-sounding, dreamy things. Sparrows go about the streets in a confidential way, and pigeons flop down upon you, as if they are assured by long experience that nobody will take the trouble to molest them. The streets slumber, whilst contemplative shopkeepers stand at their doors and look on. Yet the clerks in the Proctor's offices had sufficient animation left amongst them to look at me with surprise when I made inquiries about marriage licenses, as if they perceived the shadow of some good joke in a person taking the trouble to get married.

The weather was hot. Perhaps that made a difference; but it was hot on both my visits to Fleetborough. I do not for a moment refer to the listless, drowsy, dreamy character of the town as a reflection upon the place. By no means. I loved it for these somnolent characteristics. There was

something soothing in the quiet air of the town. I felt as if I had taken, with it, an opiate which would bring rest and pleasant dreams. But I loved it most for the dear sake of Esther Wilton, whom I met at her mother's house in the afternoon of the day upon which Lady Somerfield had brought her home.

Mrs. Wilton had betaken herself to the retirement of a pleasant cottage in Fleetborough, and Miss Barbara resided with her. The other "meg," the thin and dainty Priscilla, remained at Lindford to assist her aunt in training the minds of forty young ladies who were fortunate enough to be pupils at "The Seminary for the Daughters of Gentlemen, Uphill, Lindford."

Miss Barbara received me. She jerked a how-do-you-do into my face, and asked me to sit down, in the same breath. She looked red and rosy: the crows' feet about her eyes were pink and streaky, like the lines in winter apples.

"Has Miss Esther come home?" I asked.

"Yes," said Barbara; "she has."

"Is Mrs. Wilton at home?"

"Yes," said the elder "meg;" "she is."

"Can I see her?"

"Yes" (in the same jerky fashion); "you can."

"Will you show me to her?"

"Yes," she said, opening a door close at hand; "there she is."

Mrs. Wilton was sitting by the window in a little

parlor overlooking a small garden. A woodbine which had climbed up to the window-sill sent forth a dull, sluggish perfume, which was almost painfully sweet.

"I hope you are well, Mrs. Wilton?" I said, taking her hand.

"Better than I have been," said the old lady, who did not seem to be altered in the least; "better, considering all the trouble I've had."

I was determined not to delay what I had come prepared to say about Esther.

"It is a long time now since I first spoke to you about marrying Esther," I said, with an abruptness that seemed to make the old lady much more wakeful than she was when I first entered.

"Yes," she said, inquiringly.

"I was a boy then, a foolish, presumptuous boy, perhaps, in those days. I am a man now, and with more than a man's common experience. If Esther is willing to marry me at once, have you any objection to our union?"

"You are so very sudden. I am sure I should be the last to—"

And then she wept, just as she had done at Lindford years before.

"My husband was nothing like so old as you—I mean my first husband; and I don't know that we were too young, though it is always time enough to begin troubles. You know what losses I have had, and all through being too good to my children, they

say; but what is a mother to do when her only son asks her for what is his own?"

Mrs. Wilton wept copiously as she contemplated her difficulties, and just at the conclusion of her last outburst, Miss Barbara, without the slightest warning, came and bumped herself down in a chair close to her mother. This disconcerted me for a moment; but I ignored the lady; I continued my proposition, as though she had not been present.

"My income, Mrs. Wilton," I said, "is now sufficient to enable me to give your daughter a home at least equal to the one she will leave; and I need not, I hope, say that I have no mercenary feelings with regard to this marriage."

"Esther will have a thousand pounds," said Barbara, fiercely, "some day; and five hundred down on her wedding-day."

"Which I shall be happy to hand over to Mrs. Wilton for her own benefit," I said, returning the "meg's" defiant gaze.

"You think I hate you, I suppose," she said, quickly, crossing her arms; "but I don't."

"I do not think anything about it," I said.

"You are sure, eh? Don't make any mistake. I admire you. Mother!"

"Yes, Barbara," said Mrs. Wilton.

"Let Mr. Christopher Kenrick have your daughter Esther."

"I am sure I have no objection, if it is for her own happiness," said the old lady.

"Of course it is for her own happiness," said Miss Barbara, still preserving the same defiant expression of countenance.

"I thought it was all off between them," said Mrs. Wilton, looking at her daughter, whilst her hands wandered to the leaves of a plant that was growing on a table near the window.

"So it was, but not through him," Barbara replied. "He's a brave, honest gentleman, and you should be proud of such a son-in-law."

Barbara rose as she spoke, and coming over to me, said—"There!" very sharply, and offered me her hand, which I shook very heartily.

"I don't like you, for all that," she said, as grimly as ever; "but I admire constancy, honesty, and courage."

"Why, you always used to say, Barbara, that Squire Howard was as good a match as if Esther married a prince," said Mrs. Wilton, reproachfully, "and nothing was too bad to say against Mr. Kenrick."

"Oh!" jerked out the "meg," "never mind that."

"I am sure I only wish for the welfare and happiness of Esther. Nobody would believe as she could have had Lady Somerfield's cousin; and I am sure it was most condescending of him to offer her marriage,—and he so rich and handsome," said Mrs. Wilton, in a complaining tone, and rocking herself in her chair.

"Handsome!" said Barbara. "I don't know

where his beauty is: his money is mostly in the funds."

"What a blessing it would have been to the family, for him to have married into it!—he could have helped us in our troubles, and would; and Lady Somerfield said herself as he was mad in love. I'm sure there is nothing but crosses and trials and afflictions in this world."

Upon which reflection Mrs. Wilton wept fresh tears, and I expected every moment that she would revoke her consent to my marriage with Esther. If she had done so, I would have married Esther without it, supposing my darling had been willing; but that might not have been so easy, as I found afterward, when, she being a minor, I had to make affidavit and swear that I had her mother's consent to our union.

"This is childish, mother," said Barbara. "The girl will have nobody to marry her at all, if you don't mind."

"Well, I only hope Mr. Kenrick can keep her; for it has never been in my knowledge that newspaper people and actors ever kept the bailiffs out of their houses, or did not come to drinking, and such like; though I always said Mr. Kenrick was an exception, and a very nice young man."

"There, that will do," said Barbara, promptly; and, going to the staircase, she called out, "Esther, Esther, you are wanted." Then requesting me to walk into the next room, which I did, she brought

Esther to me; and I forgave Barbara Wilton for all she had done at Lindford.

Esther was just budding into womanhood—round, dimpled, rosy, blushing womanhood. Her thick, brown hair rippled over her shoulders. A small gold brooch clasped a black lace collar round her neck, permitting her full, white throat to come out in rare white contrast. She wore a limp, clinging dress of the dear old lama color, that fell in sweeping folds upon the floor. She was a picture of innocence and beauty. I could show you a little picture in which the studies of "Marguerite" and "Miranda" are sketched by an affectionate, loving hand from my dear girl.

How happy we were, thus restored to one another in that dear, stupid, sleepy, old Fleetborough, I cannot pretend to say. What stories we had to tell each other, what explanations to give, you will readily imagine. We sat together on the great square sofa, and talked until evening, and no one disturbed us. Esther wept and laughed by turns at my adventures. When she wept there was a sweet excuse for kissing her into smiles again. Oh, how fast the hours sped on!

It seemed as if we had only been a few minutes together when Barbara came in and said—

"You'd better come and have some tea," marching out again after this intimation with the formality of a drill-sergeant.

We adjourned to the next room, and there sat

down with Mrs. Wilton and Barbara to a liberal Midland tea, in which fresh butter, eggs, pikelets, brown bread, pork-pie, and marmalade, were temptingly displayed at the foot of a bronze urn that towered above the table and emitted a sluggish curl of steam.

It was a pleasant little room, furnished with the comforts of a middle-class house,—an easy-chair, a chintz-covered couch, an old-fashioned sideboard, a few engravings, and a score of books on some hanging shelves. The evening songs of happy birds came in at the window with the scent of woodbine; and although I could not see it, I felt satisfied that there was a little garden outside, half flowers, half vegetables, hemmed in by a wall; beyond which there were meadows and scattered houses and the slumbering river,—that same river which had borne my boat at Lindford amongst the weeds and rushes and water-lilies that rustled beneath the bow, and made a hushing lullaby music to those early words of hope and fancy of the Lindford lovers.

During tea, in artful, indirect words and whispers (the candles were not lighted, and no one noticed Esther's blushes but myself), Barbara helped me to have an early day fixed for the wedding. Mrs. Wilton consented to leave the affair entirely to those most interested—Esther and myself. And when the last train started that night from Fleetborough, it carried to Lindford a very happy passenger, whose head was full of the marriage service, house-furnishing, and plans for a little marriage tour; which

pleasant thoughts, however, did not prevent that same happy passenger from sitting up all night to earn with his pen some of those necessary sovereigns which melt so quickly away before the happy smiles of newly-married people.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY, IN WHICH THE STORY OF MY LIFE IS CONTINUED.

June 1.—Fluellen, thou art right, "the poet makes a most excellent description of Fortune," when he says that she is blind, and when "she is painted with a wheel: to signify to you, which is the moral of it, that she is turning and inconstant, and mutability and variation: and her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and rolls." How I remember me of the time when I sat on that stool in old Mitching's office and thought of ships at sea whilst studying the advertising sheet of the *Times*. "All my fortunes are at sea; neither have I money, nor commodity to raise a present sum." How often I have quoted the poor merchant's words! And now my ships are coming in. They are not going to be wrecked and scattered. Their gilded prows are looming in the bay. Fortuna is at the helm. Waft them, gentle gales, into Hope's fair port..... I am very happy. My father has voluntarily written a kind letter of congratulation upon my paper on "Unknown Martyrs," which has been quoted at length in the Stoneyfield paper by my old friend Stanton. *Mem.*, to remember that

The Briton is open to me, and anxious for a special series of papers..... A dear letter from Esther, wondering if Miss Belmont might be invited to our wedding. Am determined, if Esther does not object, to have no one at our wedding. Of all ceremonies in the world which exclusively concern those persons alone affected by them, to my mind the ceremony of marriage is first and foremost. A wedding should be a quiet, private business, the first consideration the bride and bridegroom, who require no extraneous pomp or demonstrative friendship to complete their happiness. When the honeymoon is over and the married people return to their friends, that is the time for rejoicing and feasting. I think Esther will be of the same mind when I tell her what I think a wedding should be. Generous girl, to mention Julia Belmont so kindly; but not more generous than the actress. That letter, it was a noble thing..... *Mem.*, to write a paper on "Women and Men," the leading idea being that a good woman is far better than the noblest man. *Query.* How is it that the proverbs of nearly all nations are against women? Look this up. *Shakspeare* makes his men say fierce things against women; but what dear, delightful, noble creatures he has painted!

June 2.—I am worth this day sixty pounds, and I have moneys owing to me. With my present prospects I am justified in going into debt for furnishing. I have no doubt about it. Wonder if my father will make a present to me. Shall I go and

see him? Why not? Say, Sunday next. It makes me shudder to think of that interview when he told me my poor mother was dead. Cruel, cruel, bitter day! Let me not dwell upon it. If there was nothing but summer in our lives we should not understand the blessings of the sun and the flowers. My winter is over, I think; but I can never forget the ice and the snow, and the chill and bitter winds. . . . . Cator Manners has called upon me. He has been in love with Julia Belmont any time this five years, and been rejected twice. She wished for that engagement with regard to the *Lady of Lyons*, and commanded him to coach me up in the part. He cannot think why. He knew she had a fancy for me. It was her wish that he should induce me to come upon the stage for good. Obeyed her up to a certain point, but strove to put the *Herald* in my way of acceptance. Has no objection to tell me all, now that it is settled. Knew I was in love with Miss Wilton, and had told Miss Belmont so, hoping to make her not think anything of me. She had vowed to him, over and over again, that she would never marry, and he thought *that* might be the reason which he had previously explained. Was free to confess now, that the mystery he had alluded to was no mystery at all; there was no bar sinister in Miss Belmont's escutcheon. I told him his conduct was the conduct of a scoundrel. Said he knew that. Did not know anything about an arrangement to get Lady Somerfield's party to the theatre that

night. Had known young Howard for years. Did certainly tell him privately who the "amateur" was a week before the night of the performance. Was going to marry Miss Belmont, and was a happy man; she "a blooming young lady with ten thousand pounds to her fortune." . . . . It was Howard's own idea, then, bringing the Somerfields to the play in order that Esther might see me in the arms of Julia Belmont. Was the actress really so much in love with me that she hoped to get me on the stage that I might be near her? Or am I a vain, conceited fellow? . . . . Seen Manners again. Asked him if he knew that Julia had posted a letter to Miss Wilton by the first post on the morning after the play. Yes, he knew all about it. How did she know that my prospects in that quarter would be injured by what had taken place? This was his reply. "I took her home after she was off, and told her how you had flung down the Prince's hat and cursed me. I told her that you said you would not lose the good opinion of that girl for forty thousand theatrical triumphs. I told her that you had nearly lost Miss Wilton once before because she was jealous of her, and that you did not know she was in the theatre, that she saw you there accidentally, that you were fit to cut your throat and mine, and fancied you were the victim of a plot. I told her a great deal more than I shall tell you, and I told her also what I don't mind repeating, that as faithfully and as fervently as you loved Miss Wilton

I loved and worshipped her. She said she had too much interest in your future to see you unhappy, and charged me to get Miss Wilton's address immediately. I begged her, in a manly way, to think of my future, too. 'Get me that address, and come to me in half an hour,' she said. I did so, and she said, 'Cator, you are a good fellow, and I will try to love you; we will be married when you please.' There, that's all I know, and I tell you all in the confidence of friendship, which I am sure will not be violated by Christopher Kenrick." Congratulated Manners heartily: said the lady he was about to marry was a noble woman, whom I should always respect and esteem; hoped we should be friends, and promised to forget that disgraceful bit of lover's stratagem in which he, in the strangest manner, tried to lower Miss Belmont in my estimation that he might not lose her. O world! thou art peopled with a marvellous race. . . . . Have been thinking over a pretty notion, which was, to take that old house of the Wiltons', and carry Esther home again in a double sense when we are married; but passing Nixon's, I saw poor Mitching hiding from his keeper, and gazing idiotically at her through his gold-rimmed glasses, which gave me the heart-ache. What has become of his wife? and of Tom Folgate? Shall I ever see them again? No doubt; everybody meets again in this world. . . . . Met Miss Belmont in the street. She was in a cab, going to the station with her luggage. I

motioned the driver to stop, went up to her, raised my hat, shook hands most respectfully, and said I should be her debtor ever. Said she was delighted to have been able to serve me in some way where gold did not count. Would I see her to the station? With pleasure. She was cheerful, chatty, and bright; asked me if I would give her away when she married Cator, hoped I should make a good husband, and was in every way agreeable and amusing. Surely I must be mistaken about her being in love with me. I shall put it down finally to my own vanity. I was almost piqued that she seemed so cheerful and happy about her marriage with Cator. He came up just before the train started; she kissed him when the engine whistled, and waved her hand to me. "God bless her," said Manners, gazing after the train. "She is the best woman in all the world." What a miserable dog he would have been if I had happened to think so in Harbourford, when my worser angel said, "Marry her, Kenny!" There! I am at it again. . . . . *Mem.* I must have a studio in my house; I shall put up my easel again, think of Abel Crockford, and paint. I hope some day to have a picture hung in the Academy. Shall also cultivate music, if ever I have enough time. Fear I am building castles in Spain. . . . . Am receiving many compliments about the *Herald*. It is certainly a model little journal, nearly all original matter; the work done up to a high standard. The press should be above the petty littlenesses of ordinary

life. Am studying political economy—a hard lesson, but it gives precision and point to one's style. I prefer the realms of fancy and imagination to the sober world of fact, but a journalist should accustom himself to both. *Mem.*, for an essay on "Style," showing the futility of "Rules of Composition." How lasting are the works of the truly great! Cicero's philosophical works are quite fresh in the present age. And Shakspeare will be juvenile and à propos a thousand years hence. Blessings on the bard and on all good books? How the memory of those Stoneyfield volumes crops up to remind me that I owe much of my literary taste and enjoyment of books to that old shop of my father's where I first read Shakspeare and the Border Ballads.

June 6.—Who says Friday is an unlucky day? All days used to be unlucky in my life; none are unlucky now. Besides, it would never do for me to think Friday unlucky. The *Herald* is published on that day, and it is already advancing under my management. Friday unlucky! Yesterday was Friday. As soon as the *Herald* was out I went to Stoneyfield, and once more presented myself to that strange old man, my father. "O thou, the earthly author of my blood." He took me by the hand, and said he was glad to see me. He was not affectionate in his manner; but he said I had redeemed the past, and he was proud of my literary achievements. Poor old man! He led me into that little inner parlor, where my mother nursed me when I was a child.

It is strange how the memory of a happy time overtops miserable associations. Nearly all my young life I had been wretched and miserable here; yet the little happy time overspread all the other, and I could see a boy sitting on his mother's knee and listening to "Robin Adair." My father saw that it was with difficulty I mastered my emotions. "It touches me to the heart to see you, my son," he said. "I am an old man, with less strength of mind than formerly:" and, thereupon, he fell upon my shoulder and wept. He was very much changed. I placed him in a chair, and in a few minutes he was quite talkative and chatty. I told him freely of my hopes and prospects. I showed him a little pencil sketch of "Esther," the work of my own hand. He said it was a kind face, but cautioned me to have a care about marriage. When I came away he charged me to come and see him often, and shaking hands with me, thrust into my hand five ten-pound notes. So that I am worth now in hard cash one hundred and ten pounds. I visited my mother's tomb before I left Stoneyfield. "What's this dull world to me, Robin Adair!" . . . . Called at Dr. Sharpe's to see Emmy Wilton; she is not well, but has gone to her mother's at Fleetborough. I shall meet her there to-morrow (Sunday).

June 8.—At Fleetborough. In the afternoon went to church with Esther and Emmy. Sat in a corner of the high-backed pew with Esther, and was devoutly happy. Prayed earnestly; but glanced once

during the Litany at another part of the Prayer Book, in which there is much asking of M. or N. if M. or N. will take this man, &c. Walked home to dinner by the river, and talked of old times; but none of us mentioned Tom Folgate. Emmy appeared to be amused at the recent theatrical episode, and said she quite agreed with C. K., that it was better to be married at once. "You will come and see me," she said, half earnestly, half in joke, "when I am a poor needle-woman in a garret." I said playfully, that we should have nothing to do with her; and it crossed my mind that our fortunes were turning out very contrarily. For myself and Esther, we had never been ambitious for a fine house with statues on the stairs; whilst Emmy had settled upon all this grandeur long ago; and now, here we were on the eve of marriage, and with a prospect of good fortune before us, whilst poor Emmy had lost her lover and her hopes. Tom Folgate, thou art a God-forsaken rascal! Mrs. Wilton was more cheerful in her manner toward me. Barbara was as hard and jerky and emphatic as ever. She had a fierce spar at tea-time with Emmy, but that did not ruffle the general repose of the family and the place. To church again in the evening, and after church a long walk home, over a meadow and down a leafy lane—a leafy lane in June. If I ever paint I shall put a bit of that lane on canvas, with two persons walking there in the twilight. I shall never forget how happy two young people were one

Sunday evening, walking down that leafy lane in June. . . . . Have had a very heavy day's work, and it is past midnight whilst I am making this note in my diary. Shall go to bed and dream I am a great author. By the way, I have had some strange dreams lately. The other night I was with Tom Folgate in a house where a woman had died of want; and when I looked upon the body, it was that of Mrs. Mitching, and her face was uglier than the ugliest Stoneyfield drab. Horrible idea! Another time, I saw Abel Crockford in some dire trouble about his picture, which turned out to be a copy of Velasquez, and a bad copy, too. "Never mind, Abel," I said; "it is worth two hundred pounds as a copy, and I will find you a customer for it." *Mem.* "Dreams and Dreamers" would be a good subject for an article, tracing out the idea of the unbounded character of the human mind, which makes a world of its own during sleep. . . . . To bed, and I hope I may dream of Esther.

June 14.—Had no time to write in my diary for a week. Have taken, what house does my diary think? That little place in the Bromfield Road, where Fitzwalton lived. Miss Birt (I beg her pardon, Mrs. Noel Stanton) will surely be angry when she knows this. Must write to the Stoneyfield editor, by the way. He has sent me a short note, in which he says that he had heard of my visit to Stoneyfield, and is surprised at my not looking him up. What a pleasant little place this will be! On

the ground-floor there is a dining-room, drawing-room, and a kitchen, all snug and handy; up-stairs are four bedrooms, an attic, and a little room that Fitzwalton used as a study, and which C. K. will use as a study, if Esther does not object. I should like to put up my easel in the garret, but I must talk all this over with my dear girl. My landlady is helping me in the furnishing: it is an endless, troublesome, pleasant, delightful thing—getting a house ready for her you love, preparing your first home, your *own, own* home, as a girl would say . . . . The *Herald* has been threatened with an action for libel, but there is nothing in it; I am too careful, even in the height of journalistic excitement, to perpetrate a libel. *The Briton* has commenced my series of papers on "Plodding and Plodders,"—a peculiar title, but a good subject. Have serious thoughts of writing a novel. Am getting quite into the hack spirit of literature, but shall give that up when I am rich; for example, Masters & Appollos, the publishers, proprietors of *The Stage*, sent me a picture for their "Sea-Side Annual." They wanted not only a poem written to the picture, but to the proverb which the poem is supposed to illustrate—"Love me little, love me long." This is the result of my hired muse:

I'll woo thee not in words of passion,
All I ask is in my song;
I'll woo thee in the good old fashion—
Love me little, love me long.

I will be true unto thee ever,
Guarding thee from ev'ry wrong;
Naught from thee my faith shall sever—
Love me little, love me long.

Fiercest flames the soonest smoulder,
Gentle liking waxeth strong;
Every day youth groweth older—
Love me little, love me long.

How different to my sentiments in regard to Esther —"love me much, and love me ever!"

June 27.—Have arranged for a week's holiday. Noel Stanton will write two leaders for me, and run over in the middle of the week to give my journalistic lieutenant some further assistance. To-morrow morning I go to Fleetborough. On Monday there is to be a very quiet wedding in that old church with the high-backed pews, and then, hurrah for London! Esther has approved of all my plans. I think, if I said, "My dear, I shall want a small piece of your little finger," she would give it me. We are not fashionable rich people, or of course we should worry ourselves to death with a grand wedding and a continental journey. . . . . Selden exactly hits my own opinion about marriage: "Of all the actions of a man's life his marriage does least concern other people, yet, of all actions of our life, it is most meddled with by other people." There will be no meddling with me or my marriage. Except with regard to my father and Emmy, it is to be a secret until the

bells begin to ring, and by that time we shall be in the train for London; and then, oh, for a happy holiday week!—"Youth at the prow, and Pleasure at the helm."

June 29.—Sunday night at Fleetborough—midnight in my bedroom, the last night of my bachelorhood. To some fellows there would be just one little pang of regret at changing all the freedom of a single life, despite all the joys of the married state. I have no regrets; then I have no bachelor haunts to give up, or partly relinquish; I belong to no smoking coteries, no pleasant clubs. This great change with me means what it should mean to all men who work and look forward to a career of prosperous labor: it means that I shall have a companion, a partner to cheer me on and help me with sympathetic encouragement. I feel and think like an old man, though I look very young, they say, and especially when I wear that new blue coat, and a white waistcoat. I am only twenty-two, and my wife is eighteen—too young to marry, some would say. I am forty in experience and trouble, and Esther forty in consideration and thoughtfulness. "A poor doll," that wretch Nixon says she is, simply meaning not good at bargaining for butter and groceries, and such like, I suppose. A horrible fiendish woman, Nixon; what will she say when she hears I am married? . . . . Leaving Lindford yesterday morning I dropped the wedding-ring which I had bought, in a clandestine way, through a Lon-

jeweller; I had not courage to go into a shop at Lindford for it. How is it we can all do and say things on paper that we are too bashful to do or say in person. I was wearing this dear ring, and dropped it on the Lindford platform. "What is it, sir?" the porters asked. "A ring," I said; "I must find it;" and thereupon everybody began to search. For a moment I thought, "It is a bad omen to lose that ring," and I felt quite miserable for ten minutes, at the end of which time I spied the ring near a few bright rose-leaves that had fallen from a lady's bouquet. "If it is a bad omen to lose the ring," I said unto myself, "it is a good one that I am the person to find it. In the 'Language of Flowers,' what do rose-leaves signify?" I asked Esther the question; she did not know, but was sure the sentiment was a happy one. . . . . I tried the ring upon her finger this afternoon, and felt like a long-expectant heir who had come into a splendid heritage. . . . . This chamber is evidently the spare bedroom of the house; it has been used by Esther. There are a few trinkets about; a toilet-bottle and a ring-stand that I could swear are hers; some little womanly touches here and there—a pretty mat on the dressing-table and another on the drawers, which are like her handiwork; and on the mantelpiece a small bouquet of freshly gathered mignonette, daisies, and lilies of the valley. . . . . Good-night, most sweet, most rare wench! be thy happiness my constant care; an' I make thee not a

good, true husband, fillip me with a three-manned beetle, as that sack-and-sugar rascal in the play hath it. What, O all-potent prompter, Time, wave thy magic wand, and whilst I sleep, and dream, perchance, let the transformation scene gradually disclose its rare and magic beauties. Let the music play gentle, propitious, inviting airs, whilst Little Boy Blue, or some other happy wight of fairy romance, lies down in his work-a-day clothes, and rises up in the morning sunshine a true prince of the blood royal, with a ready-made darling princess at his side. Away, away, dark sober mists of Bachelorhood! Come, come amain, the sunny light of love and sweet hymeneal hours.

CHAPTER XXX.

A CHAPTER BY THE WAY: CHIEFLY CONCERNING THE REV. PAUL FELTON; BUT ALSO INTERESTING TO THE FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS OF FATHER ELLIS.

AT Hallow once again, amidst "the uncertain glories of an April day." The changes that the showery month rings upon the fickle winds are not more variable than our fortunes. Let the following dialogue bear witness: the time is twelve; the scene, the drawing-room which you did me the honor to enter at an early stage of this most veracious history.

Myself. Now then, quick, Ellis, before Cissy comes; tell us all about it.

Ellis. (He has insisted that I call him "father" no longer—that article in the *Review*, against celibacy, is from my friend's pen.) I will tell you all I know. The Reverend (Heaven save the mark!) Paul Felton married the Widow Naseby whilst you were in Scotland.

Mrs. Kenrick. Yes, we know that, Mr. Ellis.

Ellis. During the honeymoon, which they spent in Paris, Felton was followed about by a person named White, who had also been in the Church. White turned up everywhere, and made himself excessively disagreeable, imitating and annoying

Mrs. Felton immensely. This lasted for a few days; and then, Felton getting angry with his visitor, there was a row, and White, at the table d'hôte of the Grand Hotel, said, "You are a convict and a scoundrel, and I will expose you." He repeated this in French, that nobody should miss the point of the remark. There was a tremendous scene: Mrs. Felton fainted; the men would have fought like English blackguards, but the *maître* prevented them. Mr. White disappeared, and so did the Feltons, who went to London, and thence returned home.

Mrs. Kenrick. When did all this come out?

Mr. Ellis. A few days ago in the police reports of a Suffolk paper, which I hold in my hand.

Myself. Finish the story, Ellis.

Mr. Ellis. They no sooner got home than the postman brings, post after post, anonymous letters, bearing the Suffolk post-mark, addressed to the "Rev. Paul Felton, *alias Jones, convict,* the Rectory, Hallow." These threaten Mr. Felton, that if he does not at once pay a certain sum of money to White, he will be exposed. The end of the story is told by the Reverend Paul Felton himself, who has White arrested, and taken before a Suffolk bench of magistrates and committed for trial at the assizes.

Myself. What an extraordinary case!

Mr. Ellis. White and Felton appear to have had some transactions together in the purchase and sale of benefices (a scandal upon the Church which I

hope to see bear good fruit in the Church's own interest), and the settlement of accounts was unsatisfactory to White. Felton had retired from the "business" when he came here, and intended to lead a good and exemplary life. A few months ago White learnt, for the first time, the story of Felton's antecedents, and threatened him with exposure. This, by the way, was the time when he broke off his engagement with Cissy. Soon afterward, however, he paid White a sum of money to secure silence. In the course of a short time he married Mrs. Naseby. Thereupon, White recommenced his persecutions; Felton paid him extortionate demands in Paris to keep him quiet, and even after that outburst in the Grand Hotel, made another and a final settlement with him; but the persecution was continued by personal letters and anonymous communications. Mrs. Felton, alarmed and angry, upbraided her husband; and, altogether, the poor fellow was in a very miserable state. He started off to London, took counsel's advice, had White arrested, and got him committed for sending threatening and menacing letters. Felton stood up in the witness-box and confessed that his name was Jones; that when he was a deacon he was charged with forging a bill, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment, which he served, afterward changed his name, got ordained, and is now rector of Hallow.

Mrs. Kenrick. Good Heavens! What an escape our poor dear Cissy has had!

Myself. I dare say she will believe that he broke off the engagement because he really loved her, and would not run the risk of making her unhappy.

Mrs. Kenrick. Probably she will, Christopher, and she may do so without forfeiting her title to the most affectionate consideration.

Mr. Ellis. I am myself inclined to think that you have correctly interpreted Felton's conduct with regard to Cissy.

Myself. Generous being! But is there not a crime called simony?

Mr. Ellis. There is; and to that the lawyers would not let either Felton or White confess.

Myself. A very pretty story as it stands; and we shall have our friend S. G. O. down upon it, no doubt. The practice of trading in livings is a blot upon Church administration——

Mr. Ellis. Which must and shall be wiped out, sir.

[*Enter* CISSY *and* BESS.]

Cissy. How do you do, Mr. Ellis? I told Bess you were here.

Mr. Ellis. Thank you, my pretty Cissy; you look as fresh as the April daisies, in that morning robe.

Cissy. Thank you, sir; and what do you think of Bess?

Mr. Ellis. (Taking Bess by the hand.) Think she is worthy to be your sister, Cissy.

Cissy. (Courtesying and smiling.) Thank you, again. Mr. Ellis, you must have been to court lately.

Mr. Ellis. No; nor am I in a parlous state. Miss Bessie, there were numerous inquiries for you in the village this morning.

Bess. Indeed; why am I in request?

Mrs. Kenrick. I know all about it, Bess, and will see the people for you.

Cissy. Pa, when shall you have finished your story?

Myself. Very soon now, my dear.

Cissy. We want you to take us out for a month when you are off what you call the literary treadmill.

Bess. Who would have imagined that father could be so sentimental as he confesses to have been?

Myself. Ellis could have imagined it. You should have heard his reverence talking about you the other evening.

Cissy. What did he say, pa? Tell us all about it.

Bess. Do father, if you like.

Mr. Ellis. And you may for me.

Myself. No, I will not betray the bashful young lover's confidence.

Bess. Mr. Kenrick is going to be facetious, I can see; take me into the garden, Mr. Ellis.

[*Exit* FATHER ELLIS and BESS, the latter pretending to be very angry, and casting pleasant side glances at MRS. KENRICK.]

Mrs. Kenrick. You should not plague them so much, Christopher.

Cissy. Oh, they don't mind it, mamma. Bess

likes it; she often says funny things herself to Mr. Ellis. She told him, the other day, if he was only marrying her for the sake of having a nurse in his old age he had better reconsider his offer, as she could not nurse, and hated making gruel.

Myself. Bess is an odd creature.

Cissy. She is, indeed. There she is at the window, beckoning. Let me go and see what she wants. [*Exit* CISSY.]

Mrs. Kenrick. I suppose you have no objection to our people at Hallow having some festivities on Bessie's wedding-day?

Myself. Let me see—when is it?

Mrs. Kenrick. Really, it is too bad of you to forget in this way. On Monday week.

Myself. My darling, I cannot help my memory failing; I am getting into the sere and yellow leaf.

Mrs. Kenrick. I certainly wish your memory were not so defective; the illustrations of that failing are very remarkable in the recent chapters of your professed biography.

Myself. Name them, my dear, name them.

Mrs. Kenrick. Not now; I wish to talk of matters more important. Your lawyer called, when you were out after breakfast, to say that the settlements are ready.

Myself. Yes, all right.

Mrs. Kenrick. And what about the church? Is it to be decorated? and shall we ask Lady Somerfield's brother to assist at the ceremony?

Myself. Do whatever you think best, my dear.

Mrs. Kenrick. But I am anxious to know what you wish.

Myself. Nothing more and nothing less than you wish. I should think one parson will be able to marry them; but, if you would like two, you could not have a better fellow than Lady Somerfield's brother.

Mrs. Kenrick. And about decorating the church?

Myself. If the school-children wish to do it, let them by all means.

Mrs. Kenrick. Mr. Ellis's parishioners are going to present him with a salver, and Bessie with a brooch. The Hallow people are subscribing for a silver tea-service.

Myself. The Hallow people are very kind.

Mrs. Kenrick. I wish Tom could have been here.

Myself. Ah! so do I; but he would have been a tyrant to Ellis. It seems so absurd, Ellis marrying, —and Bess, too, for that matter.

Mrs. Kenrick. I really cannot see it. I have known younger men than Mr. Ellis whose hair has been as white as snow. It is nonsense to call a man of forty-five old.

Myself. Perhaps it is. I married too young; Ellis goes to the other extreme.

Mrs. Kenrick. You are an aggravating creature. [Giving me a hearty kiss.]

Myself. And you, a dear, good, match-making,

silly old woman. [Kissing her again, like a loving old donkey as I am.]

Mrs. Kenrick. Then you give me *carte blanche*, and promise not to be angry, whatever I may do.

Myself. Don't let sentiment master your judgment, that is all.

[*Exit omnes.* Mrs. K. to confer with villagers, bell-ringers, school-children; I to describe, if possible, all that I remember of my own strange marriage at Fleetborough.]

CHAPTER XXXI.

I AM MARRIED.

ESTHER left it all to me, and I ordered the arrangements in this wise.

At eleven o'clock Esther and Barbara were to come to the church, where I should meet them. The sexton had strict orders to let no one know what was going on, and he was to give my darling away. After the ceremony we were to return to breakfast; at two o'clock to start for London, just as the bells clashed forth a merry peal both at Fleetborough and Lindford. Barbara was to occupy the remainder of the day in sending off our wedding-cards.

It was a bright summer day. Many a time in "wedding descriptions" for the *Herald* and other papers, I had used up the well-known line "Happy is the bride that the sun shines on." I thought of it now as the sun shone beamingly down upon everything, making the river sparkle in spite of its lazy determination not to disturb itself about anything, making the roofs of those thatched houses hard by fairly blaze with their yellow stonecrop and lichens, making the windows shimmer and glimmer, and the reflection of the river creep up and down the walls

like fairy lights, making the tall trees stand out green and tender against the clear bright sky, making all creation look happy and smiling, and filling my heart with gratitude to the great Master whose power is seen no less in the painted wing of that butterfly fluttering on our way than in yon glorious sun, whose genial light has called it forth for a few bright and transient hours.

The gray old church looked down upon me with all the solemnity of three centuries; the rooks called to each other high up in the brown and mossy tower; the sunlight followed me through the carved and worn old porch, and rested in a lustrous halo upon the altar, tinged with gleams of red and yellow, and blue and purple, that came in through the painted story of the Prodigal Son. My footsteps resounded like ancient echoes through the old moth-eaten church, and separate echoes seemed to wander alone through the tall pews and up into the oaken gallery, and amongst the organ-pipes. Then other footsteps came into the church, and I heard the voices of the sexton and the Rev. Cornelius Norton talking together in the vestry. I went to the church door then, and met Esther and Barbara in the porch.

A gray silk dress, the smallest indication of orange-blossoms in her white straw bonnet, and my own little wedding present, a diamond brooch, in her black lace shawl, were the only special marks of holiday and festival in my dear girl's attire. Barbara had done herself up in a stupid gorgeous red and

yellow fashion, but I only saw Esther's sweet contented smile, and my gratitude for Barbara's kind help was sufficient just then to cover any excess of color in her dress or anything else; and she knew it, for she succeeded in attaching a condition to my marriage with Esther, which in after-days cost me much money and considerable anxiety, though I got over it all and prospered, nevertheless. But why sully this eventful happy time even with an allusion to anything disagreeable?

The marriage ceremony seems to me, looking back from these days, like the misty incident of a very happy dream. I remember how proudly I put the ring upon Esther's finger; I remember her sweet yet firm responses, and my own loud "I wills;" I remember my fervent prayers; I remember looking up once and seeing a girl with a child in her arms standing just within the church, and looking on with a curious interested gaze: she had wandered into the church, finding the door ajar, and with the sunlight upon her head she looked like some holy figure out of some painted cathedral; I remember going into the vestry and signing the book, and I remember walking home again with Esther through that same leafy lane, walking together for the first time as man and wife, never to part until death should come between us; I remember that we had breakfast, and that the first bottle of champagne would not "pop," which Mrs. Wilton feared was a bad omen; I remember packing up afterward with a wonderful

sensation in my mind of increased importance and responsibility; I remember assisting Esther into that cab from the Crown; and I remember, just as the train started for London, hearing the old bells of Fleetborough ring out with a sudden burst of melody that seemed to startle the porters at the station. The sounds followed us for a few seconds, and then we were fairly on our first journey in life.

It is somewhat remarkable that one particular incident of the marriage which I ought, perhaps, hardly to remember, is wonderfully impressed upon my mind—it is the breakfast. There never was such a wedding-breakfast in this world. It was laid out in the parlor, and consisted of—what does the reader think? The most important dish was minced veal, and the least obtrusive was cold chicken. There was a nice bit of ribs of beef with celery sauce, for which Mrs. Wilton was famous amongst her friends. There was no tea, there was no coffee; but there was stout, and champagne, cheese-cakes, and jam.

"This is not a breakfast," said Barbara; "it is a luncheon for travellers."

Esther looked at me to see what impression the display was making upon me.

"Barbara would have it like this," said Mrs. Wilton, in a querulous sort of protest; "for my part, I should like the affair to have been done in proper order. I always think it is best not to go out of the ways of the world, especially at christenings, marriages, and funerals."

"We have not got to the christenings yet," said Barbara, jerking out each word at the ceiling, and chuckling slightly at the close of her remark.

"No; you quite know what I mean, and I am sure Mr. Kenrick does," said Mrs. Wilton.

"For what we are going to receive," said Barbara, "Lord, make us truly thankful; and that will do, Mary, you may leave the room, I'll see that all is right."

Whereupon the servant left the room, and Barbara proceeded to assist us to the various delicacies which had been provided for our luncheon.

"Where is the cake, Barbara?" I asked.

"Yonder, on the sideboard," said that emphatic lady. "I am cutting it up for presents."

"Oh, you should have put it on the table," said Esther.

"If it had been a breakfast in the regular way, I should," was the prompt reply.

"Barbara is so strange," said Mrs. Wilton. "I am sure when I married my first husband, he would no more have permitted—"

"There, never mind your first husband, mother," said Barbara. "Mr. and Mrs. Kenrick have only an hour to get from here and catch the train, and I beg to propose their health."

Barbara intended that the point of her speech should have been a practical one—the explosion of an uncorked champagne bottle which she had in her hands; but the cork fell flat and dead upon the

table, and the wine came out of the bottle like stale beer.

"I don't like that," said Mrs. Wilton; "it is a bad omen."

I could see all this was making Esther very unhappy, so I put my arm round her waist, and said, "There are no bad omens, Esther; and on behalf of Mrs. Kenrick and myself, I beg to thank this large and enthusiastic assembly for the warm reception which has been accorded to the toast of the morning, proposed in such elegant and flattering terms by my eloquent relative, Miss Barbara." I felt it incumbent upon me to enliven the proceedings in some way. "I am sure you will excuse me from making a long speech; for however facile one may be in addressing one's friends after dinner, it is no easy matter to speak after breakfast, after such a breakfast, and to such a toast. I can only say for my dear wife, that she heartily reciprocates your kind wishes, and I can only say for myself, that I am the happiest man in the world." ["Hear, hear," said Barbara.] "Some remark has been made about omens; I could give you a long list of omens which have struck me to-day as indicative of the happiness, the continued, the lasting happiness of the bride and bridegroom who have been united this morning under such delightful, such charming, such affectionate, such loving auspices. I will not detain you, however, with any further remarks. I only hope that the dear young ladies who have so gracefully

fulfilled the duties of bridemaids, will soon find themselves engaged in that short journey which we have made this morning from Bachelor's Bay to the United States." ["Bravo," said Barbara, whilst Esther smiled, but still looked anxiously up at her husband.]

"Very good!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilton, as if she were going to make an energetic remark for once; "it was beautiful." Then lapsing back again into her usual mood, she said, "Beautiful, if it had been at a real breakfast, and I am sure I wish it had; for I do not like this mock sort of a wedding, and I only hope you will be happy, I am sure—"

"Happy, mother!" I said; "of course we shall," upon which I kissed the party all round, and giving, "To our next merry meeting," proceeded to prepare for the journey which was to be the happiest of my life. Esther chatted about a hundred pleasant trifles; hoped we should see Julia Belmont and her husband when they were married; recalled to my mind that party at Mitchings when first we met; asked me if I remembered that evening when I flung out at Priscilla; wondered what had become of Tom Folgate; and made the merriest rattle all the way to our journey's end.

It was the height of the London season. That fact had not influenced my arrangements, for I had only been twice in London,—once when I was an infant, and once to see the publishers of the *Athenian Magazine* and *The Stage*. Esther had never been in

London, and she was in a whirl of amazement. "It is like being in the belfry when they are ringing a peal," she said, and I have often thought of her simile since, whilst listening to that everlasting din of the busiest London streets. How I came to select the house, I do not know; but I had taken rooms at one of the Covent Garden hotels. My letter could not have been communicated to the head chambermaid, who proceeded to cast an awkward reflection upon my manliness or upon Esther's youth. Later in life we might both have accepted the mistake as a compliment. Mrs. Chambermaid had our luggage carefully put into separate rooms, and my orders for the reversing of this arrangement were evidently the source of quiet but lively merriment amongst the servitors of that first landing, during nearly half a day—not more: their time for amusement was limited. In the country we nurse our fun and think over it, breaking out, as it were, into guffaws, long after London would have forgotten the wildest joke, or the most frightful tragedy.

Every morning for a week I went out before breakfast and purchased, in that attractive Covent Garden, a bouquet of flowers for our breakfast-table, a delicate attention which was not lost upon my most amiable and charming wife. We went to all the sights in a leisurely holiday way, saw the pictures, did the opera, went to the Surrey Gardens, and took a boat to Richmond. In the intervals I called upon various publishers, and was in-

troduced to several editors who had been good enough to publish my papers. I was received with kindly courtesy by all. At one place I was offered a share for a few hundred pounds in a highly successful publication, which came to grief a week afterward; one publisher offered to take any essays or articles I might send for a time, and publish them at his own risk to see if they would be successful; another offered me a pound a week to come to London and assist him with a newspaper; but these were the peddlers and sharks and beggars of the press; happily, I had made sufficient mark with the better class to secure fair arrangements for remunerative services, and I could see my way to a safe income from London so long as I chose to send up good readable papers from Lindford.

Before the week was over I received (sent on from Lindford) a letter from my father, wishing me happiness and prosperity, enclosing a pretty little old family ring for Esther, and five more ten-pound notes for her husband. "It never rains but it pours." Dear, kind old gentleman! I wrote him a letter full of gratitude and thanks, and said he would be the first we should call upon on our return. We bought a load of pretty things with that fifty pounds. It was a wedding present, I said, and it should be spent in Esther's honor. It was worth a hundred pounds to see my wife looking into all the shops and shop-windows of the Strand and Ludgate Hill, and a thousand to see her almost childish delight

with Regent Street. People stopped to stare at us both, we looked so happy and countrified, I suppose. We excited more attention than the streams of gay and gorgeous equipages coming from the park, and shopkeepers seemed to take a special delight in serving us. Oh, what parcels we sent to that hotel, what trinkets, what ornaments, what knick-knacks! The waiters in the house appeared to envy us, and the mistress came out of her little room to smile kindly upon us and say something about the weather. Perhaps we reminded her of happy country days, for she told us that she came from Lindfordshire, and was married in that county.

It was a delightful thing to stroll through Covent Garden and look at the flowers; and one evening the editor of *The Stage* procured us a box for Drury Lane. A man threw his coat over the wheel of the cab, that my wife might not soil her pretty white dress as she stepped out. His face seemed familiar to me. When I turned round to look at him again, he was gone. It was a strange fancy, but during the overture to the play I thought that man was Tom Folgate; and more than once during the performance the same face arose in my memory. Then I thought of my dream about Mrs. Mitching dying of want, and for a moment a cloud darkened my own happiness. Esther looked at me, but she put down the anxious expression of my face to the effect of a pathetic episode in the play. I speedily, however, recovered my cheerfulness, and took note of the

vastness of the theatre, and the gay audience. I observed that many eyes were directed toward my box; and no wonder, for Esther looked so fresh and bright and simply beautiful, that the gorgeous attire and diamonds and feathers and jewels and bright costumes of the other ladies only enhanced her good looks.

The week was over at last, and then we had the delightful sensation of going to our own home, which looked most charming and inviting in the evening sunlight, with a cheerful housekeeper recommended by my landlady to receive us, and Emmy, dressed in her best style and smiling her freshest smile, at the window. We wandered through the house over and over again, Esther approving of this and the other, and deferentially suggesting little changes here and there, Emmy full of gossip, and the housekeeper all attention and importance.

It was a short honeymoon, in the fashionable and general sense, and I further vulgarized the ordinary notions of a marriage by beginning to work, the very next day after our return, in downright earnest. I often thought it was lonely for my wife, but she always assured me she had plenty of occupation; then Emmy often came to see her, and many of the ladies of Lindford did her the honor to leave their cards. We were scrupulously careful about returning calls, our income compelling us not to have a large circle of acquaintances, and my occupation giving me but little time for the cultivation of social

rites. Sometimes Esther would sit by me for hours whilst I was engaged in writing glowing articles for the *Herald*, or serious essays for my kind London publishers; but her great delight was when I snatched a morning from these labors to cultivate that art, the germs of which I had acquired in Abel Crockford's painting-room, to bring her sewing into that little garret, and chat and work whilst I painted. In the evening we tried some duets on the violin and piano, and our favorite piece was "Robin Adair."

When we had been at home about three weeks we went over to Stoneyfield. It was on a Saturday morning, and a fine summer day. My father received us most cordially. It did my heart good to see how Esther conciliated the old gentleman, nestling under his arm when we went to church on Sunday, and calling him father, in such a sweet, soft, loving way. "She has brown hair, and speaks small, like a woman." And they made a picture to look upon: my father, tall and stooping, with white hair and regular-cut features, a little hard and stern, but lighted up with a subdued sense of pleasure; Esther in a light summer dress sweeping the ground, bound in at the waist by a delicate band with rose-buds on it, a blush rose in her straw bonnet, her bright eyes sparkling like gems, and her two lips parted with a smile that seemed to radiate all over her pretty, round, dimpled face. Everybody looked at them, and as we walked along—myself with an easy air of

triumph and pride in my gait—the townsfolk whispered, "It's old Mr. Kenrick's son's wife," and "That is Christopher Kenrick; he's an author, and very clever; it was quite a romantic marriage." My poor old father was proud of his son, and of his son's wife, and he said it was a pity we should part any more. "Could we not stay and live in Stoneyfield? He should not be long with us." I urged my duty to the *Herald*, and the old gentleman at once agreed that we must return to Lindford. Stoneyfield was all very well in this hour of victory, but every now and then all the old mortal enmity to the place rose within my heart. There were not many persons whom I could remember in it now, but occasionally I met men who had been cruel to me when I was a boy—men who had attacked me and fought me, and men who now and then had got the worst of their brutal conspiracies.

My wife liked Mr. Kenrick's old shop, and we rummaged amongst the old books together. There were still left some of the very works which had charmed me when a boy. They looked yellow and dirty many of them now; but there lay "The Works of William Shakspeare," just as I had left them, with their wonderful pictures of the Witches in "Macbeth." Burton's "Anatomy," and "Songs and Ballads" were still there. I asked my father to give me these, and he did so readily, saying at the same time, "The place will be yours altogether some day, Christopher. What you will do with it, I do not know;

and if I could think that those who are gone before us know of our actions below, it would make me happy to feel that your mother might see you and me and that good wife of yours here together." He spoke with a tremor in his voice, and there were tears in his eyes, as if the gradual loss of physical power was weakening the strength and firmness of his mind. I pitied him heartily, and, changing the subject as quickly as I could, asked if he knew anything of Mr. Noel Stanton. He only knew that there was such a person.

I found out Mr. Noel Stanton, and Mrs. Kenrick and myself did ourselves the honor of calling upon these highly distinguished and delightful people. We found Mrs. Stanton, with her back hair down, reading a novel, and rocking a cradle in which a baby was crying so fiercely that our entrance, and the slip-shod servant's announcement thereof, were not heard, to the chagrin and annoyance of Mrs. Stanton, who looked up, blushed, apologized, took her baby out of the cradle, said houses would get into disorder where there are children, wondered where Mr. Stanton was, answered the question by thinking aloud that he was at the billiard club, and otherwise got into dire confusion in manner and conversation.

I simply mention this as a little matter that may interest my lady readers, and in illustration of the character of my wife, who always has the nicest way of casting oil upon troubled waters. Before one

could see how it was done, the baby was in her arms, she was sitting in the rocking-chair, smoothing the little one's hair, making it laugh as if there never had been a tear in its eyes, and talking all the while to Mrs. Stanton as if there were not the smallest grounds for apology or confusion.

Noel came in presently, and invited us to stay and have dinner; but after an exchange of civilities, we came away, and I amused Esther by expressing a hope that the Kenrick household would never degenerate into such a condition as that of the Stantons.

"There is no knowing what we may come to," said Esther, laughing, "but we will try our best to keep our husband from the billiard club."

"And our babies from yelling their little eyes out in cradles," I said, pressing the dear arm that was linked in mine.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A QUIET LIFE.

I CALL it a quiet life, though no man's life can be a quiet one, unless he be a hermit, and even the severest recluse must have his restless moments. I call it a quiet life, in contradistinction to those early days of trouble and locomotion, in its difference to my life at Stoneyfield and Harbourford. I call that period between my marriage and the present a quiet life, because it has been disturbed by comparatively few tempests, because its incidents are commonplace, because, in comparison with most lives, it has been a quiet, happy time.

Not but what there have been shadows on the path, and winters succeeding the summers, winters with death in them, and tears that have almost frozen in the well-springs of affection. The first few months of my married life was as near an approach to elysium as can well be imagined. Looking back now, and forgetting for the moment my experience, judging for example, as an outsider might judge of her character, I should not have been surprised if Esther had turned out to be anything but a wise and clever wife. So confiding, so

trusting, so self-denying, one might have been pardoned for thinking, she would lack the spirit necessary to successful household management and wifely firmness. But it was not so; there existed beneath that quiet, affectionate, happy manner of Esther's, a firm will, a rare spirit. This, indeed, was shown in her leaving home at Lindford to take that situation at Lady Somerfield's; also in her encounter with Howard and his aunt when I played the spy; also in her courageous marriage of a man who could only offer her his hand and heart. Her noble, womanly, truthful nature was tried and proved in many ways during those early months of our marriage.

My constant companion and friend, she encouraged me in my labor, did her best to share my studies, and always gave me her liveliest sympathy. No man could have worked harder or more successfully in so short a time. My name was constantly before the public, and yet I found time for occasional mornings in that painting-room, and also for a visit now and then to my father at Stoneyfield, who came to see us twice, and spent two Sundays with us, a proud and happy man, changed in heart and feeling, though the hard, exacting nature would make itself seen and felt on occasions.

My marriage with Esther was conditional upon a certain arrangement with Barbara, who invested Esther's money in the commercial establishment of a relative. My wife objected to the transaction as soon as she knew of it, and begged me at all hazards

to relieve myself from the responsibility of it. The Spaniards have a proverb which holds that a "woman's counsel is no great thing, but he who does not take it is a fool." The Italians say, "women are wise off-hand, but fools on reflection." I certainly believe women have some special instinct which inspires them with almost prophetic vision in the interests of those whom they love. It has always come true in my case, that if I did not listen to the first counsels of my wife, I invariably made a mistake. It was so in this business scheme of Barbara Wilton's. One morning I found myself involved in liabilities which threatened to sweep away not only all I possessed, but to mortgage my future to a very serious extent. I had journeys to and fro between Lindford and London, visits to Fleetborough, angry altercations with Miss Wilton, remonstrances from her mother, interviews with lawyers, was served with processes and writs, and worried almost into as thin and white a personage as the living skeleton who made so much mischief between the show-girl and her father, in a novel which my wife especially treasures.

This trouble came at a most unfortunate time for my wife, a short time within the first year of our marriage, and it culminated in a catastrophe which we are neither of us likely to forget. During my absence at the office, a sheriff's officer called at Bromfield Road, and some cruel and unjustifiable speech of his fell so heavily upon my wife's spirits

that, when I reached home, it was to find her dangerously ill. Days of agony and miserable suspense followed, and a week afterward there was a little coffin in the spare bedroom—a little coffin, I say, and I say it with a grateful heart to God that He spared the one most important life.

That was a dark time, but we got over it. The case of the commercial collapse was not so bad as it seemed. It took all my ready cash, and brought out my first novel. A London house consented to pay me partly in advance for any important work which I chose to engage myself to them for, and the whole sum agreed upon immediately it was completed. I gave up all the money I possessed, engaged to pay other sums at intervals, got a release from further responsibility, and saw my way clear to entire relief within three years. How I worked! I wonder at myself now, when I think of what I achieved in a few months.

There was another sad interval in the following year ("when sorrows come, they come not in single spies, but in battalions"), which involved the death of my father. They found him in his easy-chair, with the *Athenian Magazine*, open at my last article, just as he had sat down to read after tea. It was many hours before the housekeeper discovered that he was dead; there was so much happy repose in his face, "as if he was enjoying his book," she said. A sweet and quiet end for one so warped and hard in earlier years. Peace to his manes! He was

buried beside my mother. The old church-bells moaned out a solemnly beautiful requiem. We stood by the little parlor window, my wife and I, and heard their muffled chiming long after the funeral was over. It was a bright autumn day. The sun shone on the two shambling old trees that looked over at us from an adjoining yard. The wind rambled through their withered leaves and carried the dirge-like music of the bells about with it, as if burdened with a sad, sad message. A few brown leaves hurried to and fro in the street in a weird dance of death, to the measure of the bells; but the sunshine told of the resurrection to come.

It sounds so like the huckstering heir to speak at once of the dead man's riches, as if one spoke with the funeral-bell in one's ear; but I write of days that are gone, I write as a man who regards death as simply the penalty of life, and I write of one who died at a ripe old age, in his easy-chair, apparently without pain,—as if he had gone off in a pleasant dream.

My father died worth twenty thousand pounds, and I was his heir-at-law, even if he had not, as he did, willed his property to me. Five thousand pounds went to pay for Barbara Wilton's speculation and my folly, and I vowed not to touch the remaining fifteen until my labors and the interest had made up the total sum again. My wife encouraged me in this resolve, and many times during the six years which elapsed before I succeeded in carrying out my vow, her wise counsels and self-denial pre-

vented me from breaking down; but I labored on successfully, purchased the *Lindford Herald*, and wrote for my very life, not only for that paper but for others; more particularly I wrote for that famous house which, in the dark days, had encouraged me by a check in advance for my first novel. My books were fairly successful; but there was far more certainty about that income from invested capital than there was about the money I earned in the hard and thorny paths of literature. I question if I could have continued to make a good income out of my pen, had I been compelled to go on writing for a living. In later years, after I had painted for six months in the studio of one of our most eminent landscape-painters, I earned money by my pictures.

In eight years at Bromfield Road we had four children. That first little one which we lost; a year afterward, Bessie; two years after that, Tom; and in the sixth year of our marriage Cissy was born. Emmy Wilton was a constant visitor and a source of great comfort to Esther, who frequently invited her to come and live with us, but always without avail. I think Emmy's pride brooded over those magnificent arrangements which she had talked of in the past, and because all her own castles had come to the ground she could not bring herself to have apartments in one of ours. She remained for many years in charge of Dr. Sharpe's family, and contin-

ued to hold herself spiritedly aloof from Miss Priscilla, who finally retired from her school-keeping on a small income, never having favored us with a call, though she did condescend to write me a very impertinent letter on my marriage, thanking me for introducing clandestine marriages into the Wilton family. Mrs. Nixon left the country to join a real or imaginary husband abroad, and my wife made an arrangement by slightly increasing the small income accruing from his own property, whereby old Mitching got a quiet home in the house of a widow's family. When we left Lindford, he was as happy as his wandering wits would permit; and one day he assured me he had seen Mrs. Mitching, and she was really coming home "very soon—very soon."

We left Lindford in the ninth year of our marriage, and selected Hallow for our residence, in this way. The *Herald* had become a flourishing and powerful provincial organ, and a good property. My literary engagements in London had largely increased, and I had sundry fair commissions for pictures, although I had up to that time been rejected for three years running at the Academy. I had resolved to take a partner in the *Herald*, give him full control of the property, relinquish some of my more pressing work in town, and find some pleasant country house for quiet work and dignified repose. I had to meet the gentleman who was anxious to give me four thousand pounds and take half a share in the *Herald*, at Gloucester, where he had fallen ill

on his way to Lindford; and, the time being summer, I thought the journey should be a pleasant blending of business and pleasure, so I sent a couple of horses and a small open carriage, which I had kept only during that year, to Birmingham by train, and determined to drive through Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. It proved a delightful tour, and I made a few useful studies by the way. One day we stopped at Hallow, and there saw the pretty old manor-house vacant and wanting a tenant. We all fell in love with it, including Bess, who was old enough and good enough to accompany us on our journey; and eventually I took it on a repairing lease for twenty years, with the right to purchase, at a given sum, within the term.

Two years after our removal to Hallow my second novel appeared, and the most successful book that I had yet published, "More Worlds than One," a work somewhat of the Bridgewater Treatise class, though far below that standard, came out three months afterward. In the next year the wise men of the Academy accepted two out of six pictures, and that was the height of my ambition. I remember what a happy day it was when Esther accompanied me to the private view, and we stood before those two works by Christopher Kenrick, one of them that very "leafy lane in June" through which we walked from church on our wedding-day; and I also can never forget what a miserable night it was after-

ward. Does the patient reader remember that the face of a man who put his coat over the cab-wheel to protect my wife's dress when we went to Drury Lane during our honeymoon struck me as strangely familiar? I often think that was one of those unexplainable forecasts of the future which "thrust us from our stools," and make us think more seriously, with Hamlet, about the other things of heaven and earth which philosophy dreams not of. It could not have been the man who years afterward, and on this very night of the "Private View," stood by our carriage (it was my own carriage then), shielded the wet wheel with his coat-sleeves, lifted out little Bess and Tom, and then looked up at me, and showed me (the Lord have mercy on him!) the face of Tom Folgate.

My wife did not notice him. I hurried her and the children on before me, and just as they were in the vestibule under charge of my servant, I ran back, caught that outcast man by the arm, and said, "Tom Folgate!" He looked at me vaguely for a moment, and then, with a cry of horror, as if he had seen a ghost, he rushed away.

"Police!" I cried; "seize that man."

An officer did so.

"On what charge?" he said.

"On no charge. I wish to speak with him."

"Let me go," said the man.

"If the gentleman has no charge to make," said the officer.

"I have none," I said; "but I am very anxious to speak with him, and he wished to avoid me."

"Don't holler police under them circumstances again, sir," said the officer.

"I will not," I said, tipping him half-a-crown.

"Under them other circumstances, holler as long as you like and as often," he said. And we parted.

"Tom," I said, "in heaven's name, can I do nothing for you?"

"No; nobody can do anything. I like to be what I am, to do what I am doing—it is my punishment," he said, doggedly.

"Can I do anything for her?" I said, significantly.

"For who?"

"For that woman—for Mrs. Mitching."

"If you like to go over to America, have her body dug up, embalm it, and bring it over here to be buried with the old man, you can do that," he said.

"Dead! is she?"

"Dead she is: died of drink, in a lodging-house."

"Poor woman!" I said. And the tears came fast and thick into my eyes when I remembered what she was when I knew her first at Lindford.

"Aye, poor woman! I pitied her; but I pitied that old man at Lindford much more when I stood by his grave a month ago. I know what a brute I am, and I shall live to know it—live to be old and gray, and still live and know and feel that I am a sort of walking hell. There, let me go; I'm glad

I've seen you, and seen you prosperous. You are the only human being I ever loved."

"Don't go, don't, Tom," I said, detaining him, as he strove to leave me.

"I must," he said, pulling away from me roughly.

"By the Lord, you shall not!" I said, seizing his collar and pinning him up against a pillar of one of the piazzas.

"Damme, you're strong," he said. "Well, what do you want?"

"To help you."

"How?"

"To give you money, and a chance of reformation."

"Reformation! Bosh!"

"It is not too late, Tom; it is never too late to mend. Try with all your might. Don't you remember when you were a fine, handsome young fellow at Lindford, with bright prospects? Don't you remember what happy, pleasant walks we had—our boating excursions, our pleasant evenings? Some of that old brightness may still come back again. Some of it, Tom, a gleam or two—"

"Don't, don't," said the man, his voice trembling.

"And even Emmy," I said, in a softer tone; "you might ask her forgiveness, and be forgiven."

"No, no; damn it, Kenrick, let me go!" he exclaimed, and this time he rushed away; and I stood alone in wonder and amazement.

This incident spoiled our enjoyment of the play.

We talked about nothing else during the night. I prepared an advertisement, and inserted it in the *Times*, imploring "Tom F. to let his old friend C. K. have his address;" but he never responded to it, and so the even tenor of our life went on.

We made friends with the Hallow people, and Mrs. Kenrick, in her own quiet way, gradually made the influence of the family felt not only in the village, but in the surrounding neighborhood. When poor Mrs. Wilton died, which she did at the advanced ago of eighty-nine, the announcement in the county paper of her relationship to us, brought us such an array of "calls of condolence" as would have been accorded to few county families. At the funeral, which took place at Fleetborough, Mrs. Kenrick and myself met the whole family. There was Priscilla, Barbara, the drunken brother who had reformed and become a temperance lecturer, and Emmy. It was a strange scene when the will was read. We assembled in that very parlor where Esther and I had our wedding-breakfast, and my mind was full of those past days. Although she was gone to her long rest, I could see Mrs. Wilton sitting in her chair, and complaining that the wedding was not *en règle*. I could hear her *mal apropos* remark about weddings, christenings, and funerals; and I was called out of a still more extensive retrospect which brought in Mitchings' party, by the lawyer's announcement of a hundred pound legacy to my wife. Esther's was the first name mentioned,

and everybody seemed to breathe more freely when it was found there was to be no favoritism in that direction.

What an odd group it was! James Wilton, the once drunken brother, sat near the window. He was a solemn-looking man, with pimples on his nose, and a bald head. He occupied himself by putting on and pulling off a pair of black cloth gloves, and occasionally wisking his handkerchief at flies that settled upon his coat. Miss Priscilla sat upon the little sofa. There was very little change in her appearance at first sight; but she had grown thinner and more acrid in her manner. Her nose was sharper than heretofore, as also was her chin. Her lips were as hard and firm as ever. She wore false curls, and a large profusion of black crape. Barbara sat on the right of the lawyer at the table, and made frequent snappish remarks, though she did not look at all snappish. Indeed, she had grown red, and fat, and matronly; more like a widow of forty-five on the lookout for a second husband, than a spinster with strange notions about marriage, and very selfish plans for her own comfort. Poor Emmy looked like a faded gentlewoman who had been disappointed in life; but there was still sufficient in her manner and appearance to attract and charm,—the black, sparkling eye, luxuriant hair, in long curls, escaping from her bonnet, red lips, sloping shoulders, and though her long, black dress concealed them, she had of course still those same

pretty tripping feet which had first made an impression upon Tom Folgate. Poor Emmy! it was a hard life for her—a life of disappointed spinsterhood. She would have made the man she loved a faithful, high-spirited wife; but whenever she spoke about the past, she always congratulated herself that she was not Mrs. Folgate. Her cheek reddened, and her eye lit up for a moment, with all the blushing anticipation of a young girl, nevertheless, when I told her (some time before Mrs. Wilton's death), that I had seen him. I often wondered if it would be possible for a woman to forgive a man that crime which Tom Folgate had committed, marry him, and live together for the rest of their lives with some share of happiness.

It was found that nearly all Mrs. Wilton's money had been frittered away; but the reformed son got two hundred pounds; Barbara, five hundred; Priscilla, five hundred; Emmy three hundred; and my wife, one, which I afterward sent to Emmy with another hundred to make up a sum equal to that left for her other two spinster sisters. Several letters passed between us, and a serious interview, before I could get Emmy to accept this little present; it was not until I consented to let her will it to my son Tom, that she would give way.

No, my friend, I have not forgotten the actress. If I have not mentioned her in the order of events, it is on account of a feeling that I would reserve this note about her as a closing one. Moreover,

you will find her specially mentioned in those last extracts from my diary which I am collecting for the next chapter. Miss Julia Belmont married Cator Manners, and sent us cards. She did not invite myself or Mrs. Kenrick to the wedding; but we made a journey to London in due course for the purpose of calling upon them. They had a house in Brook Street, and lived in good style. The lady was as merry and lively as any lady could be; and it was charming to see her kissing Esther and crying over her. Crying, I say, though the tears were few, and the crying of very short duration. We rallied each other with mutual mirth, and Mrs. Manners confessed before her husband, that she was really in love with me once upon a time, though she did not care a button for me now.

"Do you remember when we acted a passion, and I made love in earnest? Ah, ah, ah!—

> "'Tell him even now that I would rather share
> His lowliest lot—walk by his side an outcast—
> Work for him, beg with him—live upon the light
> Of one kind smile from him, than wear the crown
> The Bourbon lost.'

"Do you remember, you haughty, wicked Claude Melnotte? And now,—ah, ah, ah!—upon my word, I like Beauseant amazingly, and would not change him for all the gardeners' sons or princes in Europe; would I, Cator?"

The lady's laugh fairly rang through the house, and set the piano murmuring.

"No, you are the best creature in all the world," said Cator. "You shall call me Beauseant, Iago, Othello, or anything you like."

"Yes, but you must take care to be neither the one nor the other, for you'll find no Desdemona or Amelia in me, Cator."

Mrs. Manners insisted that we should stay to dinner.

"Don't be afraid, you will not interfere with professional arrangements; we are not acting now. Cator has taken the King's Theatre, and is coming out himself as Hamlet,—ah, ah, ah!—it will be very funny. He has condescended to ask me to play the Queen. I have promised to give his offer my most serious consideration."

We dined and spent a merry evening, Mrs. Manners taking us to the opera at nine o'clock, and at twelve insisting upon giving us oysters in a dozen different ways, with stout and Chablis; and "just a nice cup, which Cator makes capitally, to finish up with."

Mrs. Manners visited us several times at Hallow, and astonished the neighborhood by what they regarded as fast London manners; but seeing that, although I was a gentleman, I was also a painter and an author, and therefore tainted with Bohemianism, as they fancied, I was to be excused for having a few queer visitors. Some of the county ladies felt annoyed occasionally when they met strange, noisy guests at my table, who talked about actors and act-

resses, and having to be at their offices occasionally at midnight; but there was one person who dined with us when the Hon. Slumkey Skiddins, two county magistrates, and a parson were present, that nearly cost me my exalted position among the visited residents of Hallowshire. The visitor was a man, thank goodness! He came unexpectedly, and only two hours before dinner. Even had I felt inclined to snub him, which I did not, I would rather have fallen from that giddy height which gave my family the *entrée* to the county *coteries*, than been unkind to Abel Crockford.

During my residence at Lindford and Hallow, I had had many letters from him—queer, wandering epistles—in which he told me he had had some art lessons from a painter of eminence, and was getting on well; and I had sent him a commission through a local printseller whom I had known at Harbourford, to paint several pictures, which, by the way, were but poor daubs. This had spurred him on, however, and presently it was found that he really could paint, and did paint. One day that same printseller bought the imaginary Velasquez for two hundred pounds, and this was a great help to the poor man, who thereupon went to London, got into the studio of my friend Cross, the animal painter, and after three months of hard work there, came trudging down to me, leaving his wife at a hotel in the county town, whence I insisted upon sending my carriage for her. He brought two really good pictures—

landscapes, with sheep and cows in the foreground —and I introduced him to my county friends at dinner, as "Mr. Abel Crockford, an artist, who has dropped in by accident, and who insists upon apologizing because he has left his dress-clothes at the county hotel."

When the wine had freely circulated Abel would talk, and he talked so badly—he had such a powerful dialect—that the Hon. Slumkey Skiddins looked at his three satellites a strange look, and they all left early. My wife said I ought not to have asked Abel to dinner, it was not right to ask gentlemen to meet a person in his position.

"I did not ask them to meet him, he was here by accident; moreover, he is an artist—art raises the humble man to the position of the rich, and levels all ranks," I said, grandly.

Father Ellis, whose acquaintance I made soon after coming to Hallow, agreed with me, though he said my doctrine was flat Radicalism, which neither he nor I were supposed to be guilty of; but Mrs. Kenrick had her own opinion, and I believe she took occasion to smooth the difficulty over when next she met the Hon. Mrs. Skiddins, by saying that Mr. Kenrick had the oddest visitor the other day when the Hon. Mr. Skiddins dined at Hallow—a most eccentric person, who accidentally found himself in the neighborhood, an exceedingly odd person, a great artist though, and a friend, she believed, of Lord Northallerton. I know Mrs. Kenrick said

something of the kind, though she did not mention it to me: it came out accidentally one night through Skiddins, and I found that the mention of Lord Northallerton had had a wonderful effect upon him. It was certainly a clever stroke of policy to mention his lordship, and more especially as poor Abel had only referred to the nobleman as frequently visiting the studio of my friend Cross.

"It is only for the sake of the children," said Mrs. Kenrick, when I rallied her upon it. "Do you think *I* care for the Hon. Mrs. Skiddins, or any one else except for you and the children?"

"I don't think you do, Esther, my dear," I said, "though I thought you liked to be driving about with Lady Somerfield, when she did us the honor to spend two days with us."

I have given you a brief outline of our married life, and that monetary difficulty. The Folgate incident, and our going into mourning several times, are not sufficiently beyond the common run of occurrences to take these latter years out of the category of what may be called a quiet life. Whilst I write there lie before me some fragments of a diary from which I have printed sundry extracts in previous chapters. I often regret that I did not keep it regularly; it would have been of great interest to my family, if not to the public. There are no entries in it at various periods of my life for months, sometimes for years. Now and then I have been most

regular in my notes; in later years my memoranda have been more for literary and art purposes than for incidents in my life. A short abstract from the scattered entries of the last twenty years is necessary to the completion of this plain, unvarnished history of what I fear my friends and readers may think is a very commonplace life, after all.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A FAMILY GROUP AT HALLOW.—BEING A CLOSING CHAPTER BY THE WAY.

MAY comes in with all its charms at Hallow, covering the landscape with fruit-blossoms, and scenting the air with the sweetest perfumes of spring.

This year the weather is exceptionally mild. We have, therefore, resumed our open windows and out-door assemblies. The following dialogue takes place in the drawing-room and on the lawn. Mrs. Kenrick is sitting near the window tatting (a fidgety occupation, I cannot help thinking). Cissy is trying to understand "The Ring and The Book." Bessie is looking out at the landscape. Mr. Ellis is reclining on an easy-chair outside the window. I am walking up and down, smoking one of the choicest cigars that Ellis could procure for me when he passed through London with his wife, returning from their wedding tour.

Mr. Ellis. Why you should head that chapter "A quiet life," I cannot imagine.

Mrs. Kenrick. The very remark I made, Mr. Ellis.

Cissy (looking up from her book). And why father

should insist upon misquoting the first line of "Robin Adair," is another mystery.

Myself. I quote the song as my mother sang it; and I call that chapter "A quiet life," because I conceive it to be a correct description.

Mr. Ellis. Commercial troubles that nearly bore you down, literary struggles, several deaths, and a tremendous incident under the piazzas of Her Majesty's Theatre.

Myself. Shadows on the path of a quiet life, and nothing more.

Bess (*Mrs. Ellis*). And it was you who purchased that picture of Abel's! Oh, if he could only see it up in the lumber-room!

Mr. Ellis. It might be a Velasquez, after all.

Myself. A copy, Father Ellis—a copy, and a bad copy too.

Mr. Ellis. There is another story in the art papers which will make up a trio with those provincial incidents of your previous chapters. A picture that was originally in the collection of Cardinal Fesch, and stored with a large number of other works in the basement of the Falconieri Palace, at Rome, was removed to the Villa Paolina, and sold in 1845, by the Principe di Musignano, to a Roman picture-dealer; from whom, in 1846, it was bought, with other pictures, for a small sum by one Mr. R. Macpherson, who has just sold it to the English nation for two thousand pounds.

Myself. Poor Abel! Why was not his picture a

genuine Velasquez? He would have been rich now.

Cissy. Who is the painter of this newly discovered treasure?

Mr. Ellis. Michael Angelo. P. von Cornelius, the German painter, says it is *una cosa preziosa, un vero originale di Michaelangelo;* and so say the greatest English judges.

Bess. Did George [what a fall in dignity, from Father Ellis to Mr. Ellis, from Mr. Ellis to Ellis, from Ellis to George!] tell you that we called upon Mr. Millais with your introduction, father?

Myself. He did not.

Bess. The most handsomely comfortable studio I ever saw. You must really take a lesson from it: hung with tapestry, beautifully lighted, with one or two fine works of the sculptor here and there; a raised dais for models; a beautiful little piano in one corner, a guitar on the floor, some flowers lying about, an exquisitely soft carpet, and on the painter's easel a half-painted picture.

Myself. Millais gets a thousand pounds for a picture. My highest price was three hundred. Besides, he is a handsome fellow, and sets off a handsome painting-room.

Mrs. Kenrick. There are various types of manly beauty.

Mr. Ellis. I hope our other great artist may be as lithe and active as Christopher Kenrick when he is five-and-fifty.

Mrs. Kenrick. Christopher is not fifty-five.

Myself. Not far off, Esther. I am fifty-two.

Cissy. And you don't look forty-five.

Myself. Not with Mr. Ellis for a son-in-law?

Mr. Ellis. What, in thy quips and thy quiddities! My thrice-puissant liege is in the very May-morn of his youth, and hath a most rare juvenile son-in-law.

Myself. Nay, rather hath my May of life fallen into the sere and yellow leaf; and I have, sir, a son, by order of law, some years older than this.

Mr. Ellis. Ah! ah! by the rood, a merry jest: I'll not try to match thee in Shakspearian *mots.* Go to; thou speakest flat treason against the kingly state of youth.

Bess. A truce to this Elizabethan fooling. Let us talk of studios. What is Leighton's like, father, and Frith's and Faed's?

Myself. I know not; you had tickets for the private view.

Bess. I like to go at unexpected seasons.

Myself. Your description of one studio reminds me of another modern one exactly opposite in character; a workshop, in fact, with no trace of the artist about it, except his easel, his colors, and his canvas. He is a landscape man, and rapidly making his way to the front rank. No trace of the poetic temperament, or the refined mind in the place: a few chairs, a small billiard-table, a cupboard, and big ugly slides to the windows, constructed so as to catch or shut out all lights. But what you miss in the character of his room you find in his pictures—

poetry, refinement, and a full and glorious love of the beautiful.

Mr. Ellis. Name, name!

Myself. Ben Leader.

Mr. Ellis. One of the best of our landscape painters. We must make him an R. A.

Bess. Not before we have elected John Linnell.

Myself. Linnell is evidently indifferent about the honor. He does not care to submit his claims to a jury of rivals and competitors, I presume.

Mr. Ellis. Has he never allowed himself to be nominated?

Myself. Never!

Cissy. Are you an R. A., pa?

Myself. No, my dear; nor a Linnell, nor a Leader.

Bess. By the way, you do not describe any of your journalistic troubles, father. The inner life of a provincial editor, as one of your critics once called you, must be very interesting.

Mr. Ellis. De Quincey was a provincial newspaper editor in early life.

Myself. The provincial press, like the provincial stage, affords the best possible training for London work; but I don't think the inner life, as you call it, Bess, would interest our readers. The fashionable critic will find quite enough to sneer at in the provincial reminiscences already described.

Mrs. Kenrick. You are ungrateful by anticipation, Christopher, for the critics are pledged to your book; have they not praised it every month?

Myself. Your rebuke is just, my dear. I cry the critic's mercy. I thank them most gratefully.

Mr. Ellis. I saw your old friend Levington, the member for Lindford, the other day. Why did you not go in for a parliamentary career, Mr. Kenrick?

Mrs. Kenrick. Yes; why, indeed! He might have advanced Tom's interests immensely.

Myself. My dear Ellis, I am a plain fellow; but I could no more submit to the ordeal of a public canvass, and the humbug of mere party warfare, to say nothing of the general worries and intrigues of political life, than I could submit to any other career of hollow show and personal degradation.

Mr. Ellis. Nay, nay, Kenrick; that is not a fair definition.

Myself. Perhaps not.

Mr. Ellis. And confess that you take a great interest in politics; let me remind you how you worked at the last county election. You cannot forget that eloquent speech you made in favor of the Church?

Myself. True—true. We are often carried away out of ourselves, as it were, in exciting times. Let us change the subject. It is a grand thing to be a member of the first and most powerful assembly in the world; but let abler and better men than I am sit there.

Mrs. Kenrick. Yet I remember once, Christopher, when you came home from London, you were annoyed at having to wait for Mr. Levington in the lobby; and you said you would never go down to

the House any more until you could go straight in and take your seat with the rest.

Myself. A foolish speech, my dear; but I was young and proud.

Mrs. Kenrick. You have never been to the House since, for all that.

Mr. Ellis. It is not worth his while to go now. Levington says it is disgusting to see Gladstone nudging Bright during the debates, in the most familiar fashion. When Sir Roundell Palmer finished his speech against his own party, the other night, he leaned over to say a pleasant word to Gladstone at the close (men may be friends, if they differ in politics); the Premier shook his head, scowled, and would not listen.

Myself. You are very bitter about Gladstone always. It is a good thing for the Conservatives that he has not the temper and discretion of Disraeli.

Bess. I am sorry to interrupt a political conversation; but yonder come some members of Mr. Ellis's choir. I promised them a practice here to-night; and if Mr. Kenrick will condescend to join us with his violin, I think I can promise all of you some good music. If you prefer to go on with your chat, I can take my friends to some other part of the house, where you will not be disturbed.

Myself. My fiddle and myself are at your disposal, Bess; there is nothing I shall enjoy more than scraping through a good rough bit of Handel.

And thus our quiet evening comes to an end.

We are an interesting group to look upon. Bess sits at the piano; by her stands your humble servant; and crowded round us are four comely country lasses, with one stout matronly dame, who has a fine contralto voice; four young stalwart fellows, two boys, and an odd-looking elderly man (the husband of the contralto lady), with a deep bass voice, and the most extraordinary plush waistcoat I ever saw out of a statute fair. Father Ellis stands upon a hassock, on the other side of the piano, conducting; and Cissy is nodding pleasantly at her reverend brother-in-law. My wife sits by the window, listening to the Hallelujah Chorus, and thinking of the past. I know her mind is wandering to former days, because I see her now and then casting a quiet, contemplative glance at her husband.

Yes, dear friends, my most courteous and amiable readers, that lady in the dark-green moiré dress is my wife. She was the girl in the lama frock; she is Mrs. Christopher Kenrick, whose name is a household word amongst the poor at Hallow. She was the round, dimpled, supple beauty of Lindford, who steered that romantic lover's boat amongst the weeds and rushes of the quiet river, and thought, with him, that the society of those we truly love is the highest happiness on earth. Then she was a simple maiden in that city by the river, and I was a romantic youth, loving and being loved for the first time—ay! and the last time, for that matter; let

me confess it, pledged as I am to this full account of my whole course of love.

Mrs. Kenrick is no longer young, and she has lost much of that quiet, submissive nature which, in the old days, stimulated so fiercely the chivalrous desire of my heated youth to be her protector as well as her lover; to have her nestling under the shelter of my strong arm; to see her, as it were, clinging to me, her champion, against a rude world; and to feel myself her own brave hero, who would fight for her, and work for her, and die for her, if need be. I renew my youth when I think of these past days, and wish for all young people a pure and unselfish love like ours. For pure and unselfish, some of my readers may substitute silly and romantic. I leave that in their own hands; but I do not regret that I had not lived long enough to learn the more fashionable notions of marriage before I saw Esther Wilton.

My wife is no longer young, I say; but she has that round, substantial, fair, healthy beauty which is peculiar to the elderly Englishwoman. Her eye is still bright, her hair only shows a few streaks of silver here and there, and her voice is as young and soft as ever it was. Do you notice that amongst good people the voice rarely gets old? This has often struck me with regard to women. If I shut my eyes I can hear that girl in the lama frock prattling to me, only there is a little more firmness perhaps in the tone and manner. She would make a fine

picture even now, Mrs. Kenrick, in her lace cap and collar. Her hair is braided with all the art of past days; there is a healthy glow on her cheek still; and her teeth are her own, my friend. Mrs. Kenrick prides herself on that, and if her hair should be as white as Ellis's she would not dye it, though, between ourselves, she would prefer that no further change in its color should take place. Whilst the hand of Time has gradually wrought out his changes in that pretty dimpled girl of the lama frock, I have seen no difference in my darling, though she sits before me now, a stout, elderly lady in a moiré dress, with some wrinkles (only a few, though) about the corners of her bright gray eyes.

* * * * * *

Bess. There, that will do. And Mr. Kenrick will play us "Robin Adair" as a finale.

"Oh, yes,"—"Thank you, Mrs. Ellis,"—"Thank you, sir,"—"Please do, Mr. Kenrick, sir," say the village choir.

Mrs. Kenrick gives me an approving smile, and once more that dear old instrument which Abel Crockford repurchased at Harbourford responds to the well-worn bow. The plaintive melody of my mother's favorite song steals out into the evening mists, awakening sad and happy memories in two hearts, whose full, deep faith and love remain unimpaired in the midst of all Time's fickle changes.

True love is the star that shineth all the more brightly when the air is keen and frosty. Or the

signal-light to which storm and rack give additional lustre. It is the ivy clinging to the crumbling pillar, the violet blooming in unknown places, the lichen that adorns the cottage roof, the green thing in the desert, the flower that blooms in the mine. It is more precious than rubies, it is the only thing that cannot be bought with gold. Hands are offered in the market, but not hearts. "Love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LAST EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY.

I BEGIN with the year 1842, and, with the reader's permission, I shall transcribe such notes as may seem interesting, not only in connection with my life, but such others as may seem specially curious in themselves, looking at them in the present day, as the memoranda of an observant and reflective mind.

Mr. Ellis would have me republish the whole of my diary, so far as it is complete. I demur to this, out of consideration for the reader's patience, and with a proper regard, I hope, for the feelings of some persons who might naturally take exception to the introduction of their names into a work of this kind.

Mrs. Kenrick, for whose judgment I have the highest respect, though I do not always act upon it, is convinced that I have already trespassed upon the sanctity of private affairs. My dear wife's view represents one extreme of opinion upon this point, and the opinion of my daughter Bess the other. Mrs. Ellis is aggrieved that I have omitted incidents of local note which she thinks I ought to

have used. Actuated by some of the editorial discretion of my younger days, I have endeavored to take the wise middle course.

July, 1842.—Am getting very tired of this petty-fogging work on the *Herald*. Am an ungrateful beggar, no doubt. Frequent visits to London not only give breadth to one's views, but unfit you for mere provincial work. You must be narrow in a town like Lindford. My friend, the hon. member for this place, says the city has the benefit of my more impartial opinions of public questions. He thinks I have introduced a higher, broader, and healthier tone into the local press. . . . . Have just appointed an editor to relieve me of the heavy work of the paper, which I shall leave in his hands until I meet with a partner who will take the management entirely. I have a good income apart from the *Herald*, and painting is becoming a passion with me. My vow about the money left to me by my father is at an end—the sum is more than made up. . . . . Esther is an excellent manager. Those who knew her when she was very young seem to be astonished at her administrative ability. . . . . Lady Somerfield called and left me a capital old book on "Painting." Wonder what has become of that fellow Howard; have never heard of him since we met at the house of Lady S., on that memorable evening. Not a bad incident for a story; dramatic enough, but rather blue-fireish.

July 6.—The Queen has been shot at again. She was going to the Chapel Royal. A deformed youth named Bean presented a pistol at her Majesty. A young man named Darret prevented his firing, and handed him to the police, who refused to receive the charge, thinking it a hoax. Bean was apprehended on the next day. This was about a month after the boy John Francis shot at the Queen as she was going down Constitution Hill in a barouche and four with Prince Albert. Hope they will flog these maniacs. A simple man said to me that it was strange to him people could be got to fill the offices of kings and queens, seeing that they were never sure of their lives for a moment. "There is a divinity doth hedge a king," I said. "But not a duke," he replied, referring to the duke of Orleans, eldest son of the king of the French, who has just been killed by a fall from his carriage.

July 10.—*Mem.*, to write article on "The Chartists." Great riots in the Midlands.

August 27.—Bean is sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. Don't think I am cruel by nature; but flogging is a very deterrent punishment. In cases of gross assaults, and wicked attempts on royal lives, would strongly recommend it. *Mem.*, to write an article on "Punishments for Crime."

October 2.—Letter from Noel Stanton. Has left Nottingham, and gone to London. Has serious thoughts of going to America. Mrs. Stanton is very well. They have eight children. Fitzwalton had

paid them a visit, and was rejoiced to hear of C. K.'s success. F. is also prosperous; had left London two years ago to take the management of some works at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

October 10.—Purchased a carriage and pair of ponies for my wife, who will take great delight in driving out the children. We think of moving into a larger house. I should prefer going away into the country, and living a quiet life, now that we have got over all our troubles and anxieties, and are rich. When I look back upon the past six years, am most thankful to God for all His mercies. Miss Wilton's commercial arrangements with me were very disastrous. My wife has often censured me in her quiet way for consenting to a compact with her sister. I would have agreed to anything in those days. When Miss Wilton said I could only have her mother's consent to marry on certain conditions, I accepted them without a thought of the future, of reputation, character, or anything else, which may seem like a sacrifice on my part; but this is an utterly selfish view. Esther was worthy of any sacrifice . . . . Bess is growing into a fine girl. She evinces great, good common sense for one so young. Hope she will be a clever, accomplished woman. Don't like clever women as a rule. Hope my girls will combine womanly modesty and humility with a genius for polite learning . . . . Am progressing wonderfully with my new picture. It was great presumption my sending those two works to the

Academy: no wonder they were ignominiously rejected.

January 1, 1843.—What fresh resolves are made to-day! How carefully new diaries are opened, with strong determinations to keep them regularly. Have not been guilty of these sanguine resolutions myself. Know I should break down, like most other people, in a month. Change my blotting-pad, that is all. *Mem.* for a New Year's essay, "On an old Blotting Pad, with some reference to its Successor." . . . My last year at Lindford. Have more than fulfilled my vow about the 15,000*l.*, which has grown during these last few years into considerably more than the original 20,000*l.* left by my poor father. I have a fair income irrespective of this from my literary work and painting. The *Herald* is now *the* county paper, and this year I sell out altogether at a handsome price. My partner from Gloucestershire lives "Up-hill" in grand style. The cathedral dignitaries and the other aristocratic residents of the higher regions, did not at first seem to relish a newspaper man taking the big house in the College-green. It was some months before he had a single call; but at length Lady Mary Battlewig's carriage stopped there on its fashionable round. The news spread like wildfire, and when, by judicious and successful inquiry, it was found that her ladyship had really left two cards there, all the grandees of Up-hill followed Lady Battlewig's example, and my partner

found himself "in society." He has succeeded in this respect far better than I did at Lindford; but I never laid myself out for it. There cannot be a greater bore in life than to be "in society" at Lindford,—the tamest dinner-parties in the world, the smallest of small talk, the most scandalous of scandal, to say nothing of having to join the Up-hill league against the Down-hill. No, my painting-room, and Esther's drawing-room, are far above all this sort of thing; not but what I was gratified in a small way to see the Dean's cards, Lady Battle-wig's cards, and the other fashionable bits of paste-board, lying in our little hall. My wife says it is a just recognition of our social position and my genius. For my own part, I preferred much the recognition of that notice of "More Worlds than One," in the *Times*, and that visit of the great poet when he was down here two months ago.

With the debates upon Ireland before us, the following may have a special interest.

January 10.—Mr. O'Connell declares that this shall be the great repeal year. His five great measures upon which Irishmen are to unite are:—1. The total abolition of tithe rent-charge. 2. Fixity of tenure for the occupying tenants. 3. The encouragement and perfecting of Irish manufactures. 4. Complete suffrage and vote by ballot. 5. Abolition of the present poor-law, and augmentation of well-regulated charitable institutions.

This was the foundation of a seditious outcry, which was punished with imprisonment in 1843. What rapid strides we are making! The President of the Board of Trade, John Bright, goes a little further than poor O'Connell went; and the Premier, Mr. Gladstone, adds to the programme "the abolition of the Irish Church," "the winding-up of the Establishment." I have been out of politics so long, that when I read of them I don't quite know, politically, whether I am on my head or my heels; but I suppose I am on my feet all right, and that the end of the world is not coming. Great changes always have been going on, and ever will be; somebody always sees in them ruin and destruction. We prosper, nevertheless. "Wolf" has been cried so long, that we know not when the beast is really upon us. I cannot help thinking he is in the neighborhood now. "The Church in danger!" is certainly a genuine alarm at last. I fear I am becoming garrulous: let us return to the diary, to discover that violence is not a modern institution.

January 25.—Edward Drummond, Sir Robert Peel's private secretary, has fallen at the hands of an assassin, who shot him dead on the 20th at Charing Cross. These are unquiet times. What with "Chartists" at home, and "Repealers" in Ireland, the nation is kept in constant alarm. *Mem.*—And yet I go on painting, and reading, and writing just the same. What sort of events would upset

one sufficiently to alter the general route of work and pleasure?

July 27.—John Bright, a leading Anti-Corn Law Leaguer and a Quaker, has been returned for Durham. . . . . My dear boy, Tom, has been very ill of scarlet fever. A fortnight since we gave him up for lost. Shall never forget the terrible grief of Esther. I think we should both have broken our hearts if we had lost him. Hearts do not break, they say. There is great humanity in Fielding's note upon this. "The Doctor went directly to London, where he died soon after of a broken heart; a distemper which kills many more than is generally imagined, and would have a fair title to a place in the bill of mortality, did it not differ in one instance from all other diseases, viz.: that no physician can cure it." Pity "Tom Jones" and "Amelia" are not fit for girls to read. Fielding is very coarse now and then. So is humanity, says the cynic. I fear the cynic is right. Our neighbors have lost their infant, a pretty little thing five months old. "Only a baby!" said one of my wife's callers; "only a baby!" Philosophical, perhaps. Struck me as a good subject for an article. "Only a Baby!" Fear I am very "shoppy" in my sympathies, always looking out for subjects either to paint, or to write about. "Only a Baby!" You can never know how much that young mother loved her child. Watching its infant play was to her heaven on earth. The false wind blew upon it, the false, warm summer wind, with poison

in its breath. The tender bud shrivelled and died. Visits of condolence. "Ah, very sad; but a blessed release, a divine consideration—better off in another world—only a baby, poor little thing!" Only a baby! The greater the sorrow. Baby had lifted its blue eyes appealingly to its mother; had pouted its little lips, as if in tender complaint that mamma did not relieve its pain. Only a baby! Dear, pretty child, with its winning ways and its first word! . . . Close the half-opened eyes. Cross the little hands over the little breast. Kiss the cold, smiling, innocent lips. Scatter flowers upon the white shroud. Pray to heaven that you may be as certain of the ecstatic life to come. "Only a baby!" —"for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

September 3.—O'Connell has promised the Irish a parliament in College Green.

October 16.—O'Connell is arrested for conspiracy.

The following are miscellaneous notes at various times during this year.

"Joe Smith, the Mormon apostle, is murdered in a debtor's jail at Carthage, United States. The Mormonites are making converts in Hallowshire. Ellis tells me that many persons have gone out to join them from various parts of the Midland Counties."

"Mr. B. Disraeli, M. P., who made such a failure in his first attempt to address the Commons, has delivered a very pretty speech, on the union of liter-

ature and the arts with commercial enterprise and manufacturing ingenuity, at Manchester. The occasion was a great meeting of the subscribers to the Athenæum, where Lord John Manners and Mr. Cobden spoke."

"Have invested some money in railway shares, but shall move it, and be content with a reasonable per centage. Since October, Railton & Son, the sharebrokers, say there have been 41 new prospectuses issued for 41 new lines. On Aug. 14, more than 90 new lines, requiring 60,000,000*l.* of subscribed capital, to complete them, were put forward. Add to these the 41 new lines requiring 35,265,000*l.*, and there are 131 new lines, calling for an investment of 95,265,000*l.*, with the power of borrowing one-third more, making a grand total of 127,020,000*l.* Must not get mixed up in this kind of investment, and no need for it; shall sell out and be content."

"Am worth at the end of this year more than 25,000*l.* What a reflection to look back to that day when I walked to Lindford, penniless and hungry! Mrs. Kenrick thinks my own life would make a good novel. Have no desire to write another novel."

There are no entries in my diary for 1844 and 1845; but the most important incidents of that period are related in my previous chapter, namely, my removal to Hallow, and the strange meeting with Tom Folgate. During this period I had a severe illness, and Cissy had an attack of measles. We

went to Bordeaux, Paris, and Dieppe, in the summer of '45, having had a run up the Rhine two years previously. During the early part of 1844 I received a kind letter from Fitzwalton, who informed me that he was about to retire from his London partnership. Letters of congratulation also came to me from several eminent writers, upon the success of my second novel, which has since gone through several cheap editions. I take up the diary again in 1846, to find only a few stray notes, chiefly relating to my arrangements at Hallow, with calculations of expenses of furnishing, scraps of plans for a studio, extracts from books on farming, memoranda about servants' wages, with other general matters of no particular moment. The next year, and the next, offer little better materials for publication. Our life at Hallow gradually became such a quiet existence, and my own pursuits kept me so close a recluse from the outer world, that my experiences gradually lost everything in the way of exciting incident.

December 30, 1848.—A terrible year. Europe seems to be in a state of general revolution and war. God be thanked, there is peace in England! Hope I am sufficiently grateful for the peace and happiness of Hallow. Noel Stanton is making his way at last. Poor fellow. Shall never quite forgive myself for punishing him in that little editorial room at Lindford. Stanton tells me he has for some years past been engaged as a writer on the *Morning*

Chronicle now. His letters are full of references to Louis Napoleon, who has just been elected for the department of the Seine, and three other departments, to the National Assembly. Stanton says he has been "hand and glove" with the prince. (*Mem.* Noel was ever a boaster.) Believes he will one day be Emperor. Poor Noel! Emperors and kings are becoming very unpopular. We are on the downward road of Democracy. Europe will gradually drift into Republicanism. . . . . The Rev. George Ellis fulfils all my wife's predictions, as a good, kindly, genial, scholarly fellow. Called to-day, and is very much excited about the state of the nation; says we are going to the bad; the Church is in all kinds of danger, predicts its separation from the State, and expects revolution. If it came to a fight, Ellis would prove himself a tough antagonist, intellectually and physically. . . . . Mrs. Kenrick has organized a splendid entertainment for the closing of the year. It was a rare notion, that of hers, about a procession to welcome Christmas. We had quite an old-fashioned festival. Brought the Yule Log and the Boar's Head into the hall in state. Ellis was got up as Father Christmas, and looked the part to perfection. Shall call him "Father" in future.

In 1849 I painted "Harvest Home," which the Duke of Athol purchased for three hundred guineas. In 1850 I published "Crœsus," which has gone through two editions in America. From this time

to 1860 I did not make a note in my diary, which was packed away in the lumber-room with Abel Crockford's Velasquez, several of Abel's crude pictures, two or three hundred old books, a small theatrical wardrobe, Tom's broken rocking-horse, Bessie's model house (presented to her by Father Ellis), several specimens of Etruscan pottery, and a variety of other articles, such as old guns, a couple of swords, some curious harness, dumb-bells, boxing-gloves, and fishing-rods. At the end of 1860, having had a long rest, both from painting and writing, and being one day curious about certain past entries in my diary, I hunted it up, and entertained my family with sundry extracts therefrom. Mrs. Kenrick, thereupon, strongly advised me to write my life, and Bess, who had grown into a precocious, smart young woman, echoed her mother's sentiments. "Incidents of my Life," was the title which Mrs. K. suggested. Of course I should not give all those early notes, and that part about Stoneyfield. Bess agreed with me that all that early part would make up the book; that indeed it was the book. In 1861, having carefully bound up my old diary, I recommenced my notes; and I now extract therefrom the various paragraphs which follow, omitting, as far as possible, all extraneous and prosy matter.

December 10, 1861.—A long letter from Tom Folgate, from which it appears that on the day following my meeting with him near Drury Lane, he

started for America with an awakened desire to try and redeem the past. Had been successful in obtaining employment at some ironworks, and by dint of hard work had made a fair position for himself. "Thoughts of the past," he says, "would grip me by the throat, as it were, sometimes, and then I would have a drinking bout; but my employers appeared to value me for all that. I told the youngest member of the firm a bit of my story one day, and he seemed sorry for me. Ah, Kenrick! to be an infernal scoundrel and have just goodness enough left to know that one is what one is, that is hell if you like. We carry our hell with us, Kenny; we carry it about the world burning our very hearts out. . . . . You must keep this letter a secret; it is only intended for you, unless, my dear friend, you see any favorable opportunity for using it in my interest, and that I fear you will not. I should like to feel that Emmy (poor, deceived Emmy!) had forgiven me, and that she is married to a better man. My God! Kenrick, when I think of what a rascal I have been, I am the most miserable of mortals. Sometimes I forget the past, and then I am almost happy. . . . . I have shut out England from my heart forever. I don't want you to write to me. I beg you won't, unless it is just one word—'Forgiven'—and that you can address to me at the Post-office, Boston, U. S. I promised to tell you my story. I cannot now; but I used to think what I had suffered when I was young, and the wrong done

to me by my mother, justified any conduct of mine with regard to women. I am not half so much to blame about Mrs. Mitching as you may think; it was her fault. What a beast and coward I am to say so! Poor lost soul! I have had a tablet put up to her memory; and my present wife knows her story. I told her all before I married her. I forgot that you did not know I am married. Yes; seven years ago, and I have four children, the eldest a boy. God spare him my troubles. My wife is a Genoese; and we rarely speak round my table anything but French. . . . . I try to think the past dead. I ought not to have revived it in my memory with this letter; but, somehow, I felt it was due to you. . . . . *My mother eloped with a rascal when I was eight years old; it broke my father's heart. That is the secret of my youth.* The Lord have mercy on me! I often tried to meet that man, but never did. I should have murdered him. He blasted my life, made my name dishonorable. . . . . I am a stooping old man now; you would hardly know me. Is Emmy living? Put that in your letter, too. . . . . Farewell! *Remember me when you pray.*—T. FOLGATE.

June, 1862.—Cator Manners and his wife here this month. A fine woman, Mrs. M. She was full of fun about our Harbourford days. Pictured me to Mrs. K. playing the fiddle. Father Ellis greatly amused.

July 10.—Lady Somerfield died, aged 60. *Requiescat in pace* . . . There are very good short memoirs of her ladyship in the local papers. The *Times* mentions her in six lines, that are a tribute to her name and family.

September 7.—Have been confined to my bed with a cold, through going out to shoot on the 1st, which was a wet, miserable day. Felt very ill once when no one was near me, and thought I was going to die. Am a great coward, I fear, about death. . . . . What will they say of me when I am gone? Shall I make a name as a painter? Shall I make a name as a writer? Shall I be known for a dozen years after death, either as one or the other. I fear me not. After the tomb, oblivion. I have achieved a certain fame as a second-class writer and a third-rate painter. Let me be content to survive it. The author who lives to find that the public care for him no longer, must be wretched indeed. To outlive your reputation, and to know it, must be misery; to outlive it, and not to know it, like the churchman in "Gil Blas," what is that? Men do not suddenly become famous. Is it not Horace who describes the fame of Marcullus as a course of gradual development, like the growth of a tree? You may suddenly hear a name trumpeted by the herald Fame, but you know not how long the man has been a candidate for this honor.

Mem. For an illustration of Fame.—Was smoking to-day in the summer-house. A perfect ring of

smoke rose steadily upward from my pipe. It sailed promisingly aloft. On a bracket by the wall there is a statuette representing Fame, with a trumpet and scroll. For a moment it seemed as though the smoke-ring would become an ethereal wreath upon Fame's forehead. . . . . It touched the statue and was lost. I thought there was a moral in its brief career. How many a futile dream floats upward to the temple of the fickle god, to be dispersed by a single touch of the hard reality! What if you stand beside the great herald, and have your advent on the Olympian heights proclaimed! "Fame's loudest blast upon the ear of Time leaves but a dying echo." Even the gorgeous scroll will fade and disappear as completely as our evanescent ring. Let those whose dream is realized be not unduly elated. There are pitfalls at the summits of the highest mountains. Even the language in which great men of antiquity conversed is forgotten. Let those who are dreaming still, expect nothing; so shall they not be disappointed. Let those who have not begun to dream, never commence; so shall they be happy.

April 10, 1863.—Cissy has sat to M—— for her portrait; he is charmed with her, and will send the picture to the Academy.

July 9.—Bess has done herself the honor of refusing the hand of a wealthy magistrate, residing in the adjoining county, because he did not like music,

and thought the Waverley Novels damn nonsense. Hallow Manor has grown into an important county establishment, with well-appointed accessories, and the Kenricks have taken rank with the best county families, despite, now and then, the smack of Bohemianism which will break out in their manners and customs.

July 20.—Father Ellis is in ecstasies, that Bess has refused Robinson. The man is an ignorant grub, Ellis says; and Bess, the best girl in the world, should have a husband who is worthy of her; in which I quite agree.

March 9, 1864.—Have purchased Longden Farm and fifty more acres of land. Shall, if I can afford it, invest all my money in land and freehold property.

June 10.—Made arrangements for Emmy Wilton to spend a month with us at Tenby. Father Ellis promises to accompany us.

December 9.—Dined in intellectual society at the Garrick Club, of which I have been a member for several years. Only been five times in the club, nevertheless. . . . . Had a pleasant ramble with Mrs. Kenrick through Covent Garden, talking of our short honeymoon here. A bright, fine day. Flowers and fruit in Covent Garden always. Take great delight in this locality. Landor pictures the changes of the place in his *Imaginary Conversations*. The convent becomes a play-house; the garden where a

salad was cut for an abbess is a great noisy market. Mrs. Kenrick is wonderfully interested in my gossip. She cannot understand that Covent Garden was a fashionable place of residence. It was, and the resort of genius and beauty—Addison, Butler, Dryden, Fielding, Churchill, Bolingbroke, Dr. Johnson, Garrick, Macklin, Peg Woffington, Mrs. Pritchard, Kitty Clive, Vandevelde, Lely, Hogarth, and a host of other brilliant characters. In connection with the Old Hummums is told that remarkable story of Ford's ghost. It is in Croker's edition of Boswell. Told what I could remember of the narrative to Mrs. K. in our sitting-room over some hot elder-wine and brandy. Makes a capital Christmas story. Must use it at Hallow on the Eve. What a splendid market-square this Covent Garden might be! Fine shops and hotels on four sides, a model market-house in the centre, with fountains. It would pay the Duke of Bedford to make these alterations. Pity the nation does not get it out of his hands. Hope Mr. Green will continue to be successful at Evans's; the only moral place of its kind in London. Supped with Mrs. K. in the private gallery on the third night of our visit to town. Took two young ladies with us, nieces of Levington's, and a Captain West, their uncle. It was my treat. Gave them the standard dish of the place—kidneys and potatoes; with a hot cup-compound to conclude. Green brought us some flowers, and said the Prince of *Wales* and a party would occupy our little box on

the next night. Somebody should tell the story of Green's life. He is full of curious anecdote. Fear some of his anecdotes are more curious than true. Pleasant, chatty man represents a past age, like C. K.

1865.—Tom has left Woolwich, and passed his examination triumphantly. Has chosen the Artillery. Will have a holiday now, and join the Hallowshire Militia, "just to keep his hand in," as he says. . . . . Captain W—— has been on a visit at Hallow with Tom. The captain was on board the *Tiger*, famous during the Crimean war, and was a prisoner amongst the Russians. "How did you like your imprisonment?" Mrs. K. asked. "Oh, it wasn't very objectionable, so long as you had money to make things pleasant with your jailers, and to buy what you wanted." He had several times been in action. "What were your sensations on first entering into a conflict, Captain?" "Well, some people," he said, "have very erroneous notions about these things; it is thought that a man goes into action more pluckily at his second than on his first engagement. Now, the truth is, when men are going in for their first fight, they are all so anxious to prove that they are not cowards, they are all so bent upon making a reputation for courage, and all so jealous of their characters for the same, that they are reckless in their daring, and they overdo courage. When the second fight comes, they are much more

careful, and will accept shelter from shot very eagerly, if they can get it. The first fight has something of the fine chivalry of war in it—the second becomes business. That's my experience." Mrs. Kenrick wishes Tom had chosen some other profession.

August 7, 1866.—Just returned from Malvern. Emmy Wilton has accompanied us. She tells Mrs. Kenrick that Miss Wilton has gone to live with her sister Priscilla, at Lindford. Singular incident occurred to me at Malvern. Went into the billiard-room at the hotel for the purpose of smoking a cigar. A pleasant, gentlemanly person there with a gray moustache. Challenged me to play a game. Had not taken up a cue for some years. Liked the fellow, and played with him. He beat me easily. Very chatty, talked of places I knew, and books. At parting we exchanged cards. Thought he looked surprised at my name. I declare that his own did not carry my thoughts to past days, on the instant; but on my way home it occurred to me that I had just exchanged cards with my old rival, Howard. On inquiry, I found it was so. He is married, and a young lady with long brown hair, who rides a chestnut cob past our house every afternoon, and whom we have all admired, is his daughter. Mrs. K. thought it was perhaps not worth while to renew the acquaintance.

September 10.—How persistently people meet again! At Norfield Court, where we dined yesterday, we were introduced to the Howards. Of course

no reference was made to the past. They are very pleasant, agreeable people, and Miss Howard is charming.

October 7.—Abel Crockford is making a respectable position as an animal painter. He is staying at the Kenrick Arms, Hallow, and painting. He calls upon us nearly every day. The girls are pleased with his wife—a simple, fat, rosy woman, who almost worships her husband. A shrewd fellow, Abel. Tells me he was very fortunate two years ago: bought a picture for ten pounds at a sale, and sold it for two hundred and fifty—it was a Cooper, and in Sidney's best manner. Abel does not think that old picture was good for much, after all. Very glad when he sold it. . . . . The other night we had a little musical party of our own, for the amusement of Abel and his wife, at which I delighted our visitors by trying over some of those crack-brained waltzes and quadrilles which the orchestra used to play at Harbourford. Abel, who must be nearly seventy, was as lively as a young man, and would sing a comic song, at which Mrs. A. laughed immoderately, though she must have heard it a hundred times. What a devoted wife she is who can go on through a whole lifetime laughing at her husband's old jokes! Always guard myself against pestering Mrs. K. with that kind of egotism and selfishness. S. Skiddins has told one story, in my hearing, a dozen times at least. On the last occasion, it was actually led up to by his wife, who laughed at it as

if she had heard it then for the first time. What kindly, good-natured, affectionate humbug!

October, 1867.—"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny." Man and woman, youth and maiden, let these words of the Wise Man of Stratford be taken into your memories—not as a drop of gall to mingle with your opinions of humanity, but as a standing caution against the scandal-monger. If you have not yet suffered from the poisoned tooth, William Shakspeare tells you that you shall not escape it, and you may be quite sure that William Shakspeare is right. Montesquieu said he never listened to calumnies, because, if they were untrue, he ran the risk of being deceived; and if they were true, of hating persons not worth thinking about. Another writer has said that those who propagate evil reports, frequently invent them, and that it is no breach of charity to suppose this to be always the case, because no man who spreads detraction would scruple to produce it. These are very good reasons for turning a deaf ear to the scandal-monger. Let us add to them the more selfish one which we indicate at the outset. Calumny will surely seize upon you some day. You may only be lightly grazed; you may be deeply lacerated. Remember this when you hear the hissing of the scandal-monger, and think how much charity you will expect from friends and foes when *you* are attacked by calumny. . . . . These are

notes for an essay that never was written. They were inspired by some scandalous gossip in the village concerning an innocent girl who drowned herself because a wretched prude, and a designing villain, had propagated a most evil and untruthful report about her.

November 5.—It would seem that the air is thick with scandals. Father Ellis has heard some shameful reports about the Rev. Paul Felton, who is very angry, as well he may be. Mrs. Kenrick says Rev. P. F. is particularly attentive to Cissy, who talks about him continually.

Nov. 11.—The electors of the adjacent borough have offered me a special honor—an uncontested seat in Parliament. I have had the courage to decline it, notwithstanding the importunities of my wife and Father Ellis. What do I want in Parliament? What is Parliament to me, or I to Parliament? Should be compelled to reside in town part of the year . . . . Have gracefully, but positively, declined; but undertaken to be chairman of a local committee for the Hon. Slumkey Skiddins.

December 2.—Met Stanton in London at the Garrick. He is a weakly fellow on two sticks. Says his eldest son is on the *Times*, and insists upon almost keeping the house. Has two daughters at home; three married, and doing well; and two sons in the Customs. We smoked a cigar together, and he told me a wonderful incident that had occurred

in his life four years ago. First reminding me of his prediction about Louis Napoleon, he said, "I had regularly broken down in health, and was advised to go to the south of France for change. Had hardly been in the country a month, when, one day, a fine showy officer entered my poor rooms (I had had to borrow money to go away), and asked me if my name was Noel Stanton? 'Yes,' I said, 'it is.' 'Formerly of the *Morning Chronicle?*' 'The same,' I said. 'I have the Emperor's commands to request your attendance upon his Majesty at the Tuileries.' I took train for Paris the same day, and waited upon his Majesty in the morning, pondering much, you may be sure, how Louis (a bit of the old pomposity here, Louis, forsooth!) knew I was in France. He received me, Kenrick, most affably, inquired into all my circumstances, and I told him I was poor, and in bad health. I did that in spite of a desire to maintain my own dignity, because I had known *him*, sir, when *he* was poor. 'I am rejoiced to find you in my country, and to have this opportunity of acknowledging your kindness in the past,' said the Emperor. Then moving to an escritoire, he said, 'I fear there is only one way in which I can be of service to you. Here is a concession for railroads. Take it to Messrs. R——.' I did, my boy, and they gave me five thousand pounds for it. What think you of that, Christopher Kenrick?" "That your friend is an emperor indeed," I said. .... The Rev. Paul Felton has offered his hand

to Cissy, and Mrs. K. and myself have endorsed Cissy's acceptance of it. Fear I am prejudiced; but there is something about Felton which I do not like.

1868.—This year I commence the story of my life. It is shrewdly true that "there are three difficulties in authorship: to write anything worth the publishing; to find honest men to publish it; and get sensible men to read it" . . . . Shall overcome the two latter difficulties through the *Gentleman's Magazine*. What of the first?

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONTAINS THE FRIENDLY VERDICT OF A FRIENDLY JURY, AND BRINGS MY "ROUND UNVARNISHD TALE" TO AN END.

ASSEMBLED in my study, on a pleasant evening at the end of May, are Mrs. Kenrick, the Rev. George Ellis, Mrs. Ellis, Miss Kenrick (my dear Cissy, who says she never intends to marry, and I hope she may keep her word, for she is a great comfort to her mother, and, after all, marriage is a very serious business), Miss Emmy Wilton (a thin, spinster lady, with an eye-glass something like poor old Mitching's), Mrs. Abel Crockford and Mr. Crockford, Mrs. Cator Manners, and Mr. Cator Manners. It is a special meeting, called at the suggestion of Bess, for a closing criticism upon my book. Poor Tom is in India; his voice, if necessary, shall go which way the meeting chooses. We have had an excellent dinner, have sat two hours over our wine, the ladies having had an hour in the drawing-room; coffee has just been served in the library. I preferred this, that I might feel more master of the situation than I should in the other room. Ellis says I have bribed them with a good dinner.

"The worst of the business is," I say, "that I

must read you the last two chapters, one of which, containing extracts from my diary, is rather long."

There is a cry of "Read, read," whereupon I take up my MS. and read the two preceding chapters, at the close of which there is a general round of applause, and Ellis says he would like some curaçoa in his coffee. His wish being promptly obeyed, and Mrs. Kenrick having called an interval for fresh supplies, the last dialogue begins.

Myself. Ladies and gentlemen, my dear friends, you have all read my story. Miss Wilton, I find, only discovered it three months ago; and Mrs. and Mr. Manners have read it since they have been at Hallow this week. Mr. Crockford has had a copy of the work month by month, as it has appeared. It has occurred to Bess, and I have adopted her suggestion, that I should bring you all on the stage for the closing scene. Mr. Noel Stanton is too ill, or he would have been with us. His wife could not come alone. Mr. Fitzwalton has gone to Russia, about a contract for locomotives. His wife is an invalid. She has lost that decayed tooth, and is suffering from neuralgia. The Miss Wiltons, the "megs" of my early chapters, have not been invited to come here. Mrs. Nixon has left England; if she had not, I should have excluded her from my general invitations. Death, alas! has removed others. Two loved ones have passed away, in the course of nature, "gone to their rest;" two others have been removed under painful circumstances, which bring

back to some of us sad and bitter memories; and one is dead, though living, forgiven on this earth, but not forgotten. We all hope and pray that he may be forgiven, and not forgotten, on the Great Day when judgment shall be delivered. It had long been a fond desire on my part to tell this last story of my life. Mrs. Kenrick gave me constant encouragement to do so. She says I owe you all an humble apology for the use I have made of your names. If I have said anything which has pained Mrs. and Mr. Manners, or Miss Wilton, or my friends the Crockfords, I am sincerely sorry. The only revenge I can offer you is, to print anything you may say about my performance, as a closing chapter.

Mrs. Manners. The story is a very good story; but it is not true.

Mr. Manners. It would have been a much better story if some parts that are true had been left out.

Mrs. Crockford. If I may be allowed to offer an opinion, which I feel ashamed to say anything at all in such company, it is that the book is the most beautiful one I ever saw; and the tears that I have shed over it about Mr. Kenrick living at Harbourford, I am sure I could hardly say.

Mr. Crockford (who was very fidgety whilst his wife was speaking, nodding at her to bring her remarks to an end). I don't think I can hardly forgive the Squire for buying that picture, though it was *like his good* heart to do it.

Mr. Ellis. I think a certain private conversation at Durham might have been omitted; but no matter.

Cissy. Tom is not here to object to the details of that part of the story in which father was poor, so I will put in a mild protest for the dear boy, with an expression of my own regret that pa has thought it wise to publish the whole of our conversations in his "Chapters by the Way."

Bess. The story is new, and it is all the better if it is true. If I might have had my own way in revision, I, too, should have excluded some of the Durham dialogue, with other references to myself and Mr. Ellis. But I bow submissively to higher authority.

Mrs. Kenrick. Christopher has done more than justice to his wife, and it would be ungracious were I to offer any further objections to the story than those which have formed my constant protest against certain details. I very much dislike that reference to Mr. Crockford and Lord Northallerton; and I repudiate the inference which the reader must draw with regard to my fancied explanation to the Hon. Mrs. Skiddins.

Mr. Crockford. With great deference, it didn't please me, that part. I baint so ignorant as I used to be at Harbourford. A man as does his duty and tries honestly to do justice to the talents that God has given him, is as good as a lord; and better than a good many lords, as some on 'em will discover when the reckoning takes place.

Mrs. Manners. The conceit of that young gentleman at Lindford! To think that a fine dashing actress with a fortune was in love with him! Men are born with double the vanity of women. But that was a vile plot of Cator's—a vile plot.

Mr. Manners. All is fair in love and war.

Mrs. Kenrick. Why did you not invite Mrs. and Mr. Howard to come?

No answer from the author, who sits sipping his coffee and smiling benignantly on his family and friends.

Miss Emmy Wilton. I am sufficiently indifferent to the world to be quite indifferent as to what it says or thinks of me; but I hope Christopher does not think that any selfish feelings of pride prevented my accepting Esther's invitation to live with her always; if he does, I will prove my gratitude by never leaving Hallow again.

Myself. That is something gained. I do think it was your pride; and now you will stay with us, sister Emmy, for good.

Cissy. Yes, do; do, aunt Emmy.

Mrs. Kenrick. Do, Emmy; say you will now, at once.

Emmy. On two conditions, my dears.

Myself. Name them, Emmy. There is hardly any condition that you can stipulate to which we will not agree.

Emmy. That you will exonerate me from a selfish, *proud* wish in the past, and not allow me to live with

you longer than is perfectly agreeable to my sister and niece. Sometimes relatives outgrow affection when they see too much of each other.

Myself. I agree, Emmy, my dear friend, I agree.

Cissy. Oh, I am so glad! Pa's book has done some good, at all events.

Mr. Crockford. But it would have fared something like the picture as the artist put in the market-place for critics to point out objectionable parts, if Mr. Kenrick had let us all have a hand in correcting the proofs.

Myself. A happy thought, Abel.

Mr. Ellis. The diary is the best part of the book.

Mrs. Manners. No, Mr. Ellis, the early scenes at Lindford.

Mr. Crockford. That bit about the theatre at Harbourford is most to my taste.

Cissy. I like the description of the river at Lindford, and that scene at Lady Somerfield's.

Bess. The opening chapter is equal to anything in the book.

Mr. Ellis. What think you to that philosophical dialogue between Father Ellis and the author?

Mrs. Manners. The driest part of the whole story.

Mr. Manners. Ah, ah,—that is one for you, Mr. Ellis.

Mr. Ellis. It is clear we shall never agree about the merits of the work; let us come to the tag, and finish the scene.

Mr. Crockford. I'll tell you a story of my early

career that I have never told Mr. Kenrick. Perhaps you may get a moral out of it for the fynally, as they calls it in music. When I first began to paint, I used to do little bits that were raffled for in public-houses. The second thing as I did was the lion and the unicorn. I painted it for a sign; but the party broke, and I had it on my hands. I made it into what you might call a cabinet picture, put a frame round it, and got up a raffle for it; twenty subscribers at one shilling, the winner to pay half-a-crown for beer. A man—a curious sort of man, as read a good deal, and was looked up to at the public-house—won it, having put in without seeing it. I took it to him at his workshop the next day, proud as he had got it. "What's the subject?" says he. "The lion and the unicorn," says I. "Which is the lion?" says he. "Why that un," says I, pointing to the lion indignantly. "What's to spend," says he, "by the winner?" "Half-a-crown," I says. "And which is the unicorn?" "Why that un," says I, pointing to the unicorn. "Then I wish I hadn't a won him, Abel," says he. I was never conceited about my painting after that. Now, Mister Kenrick, sir, to talk a bit like you make me in them early chapters; we haven't said we wish we'd never a bought your book; we've offered a bit of fair criticism like, but we none of us axed you, sir, which is the lion and which is the unicorn. I hope, Mr. Kenrick, sir, that be agreeable to your feelings, and if *you can* make a moral out of that, why ring the cur-

tain down, sir, to the tune of "Robin Adair," and say no more about it.

Mrs. Manners. And let the last words be something smart and sentimental about the reward of courage, and the triumph of love that's true and faithful ever.

Mr. Ellis. A bit of Latin, an easy familiar quotation, would, perhaps, sound well:—

"Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit;
————ut posset contingere metam."

"He suffered and did much in youth; he bore heat and cold, in order that he might reach the goal."

Myself. Apt, but stilted. I like better Hans Christian Andersen's motto,—"People have a great deal of adversity to go through, and then at last they become famous." I will speak the tag. 'Twere best it should be simple as my story. First, my thanks are due to you, my kind, dear friends, for the part you have played, individually and collectively, in this drama of life. To those critics who have said so much that is gracious and liberal between the acts, I tender my cordial acknowledgments, satisfied that they have been more generous than just. And, lastly, to you, my dear audience, to you who have borne with me so patiently, content with the incidents of a boyish love and its homeliest scenes, the author apologizes for his shortcomings, is grateful for your attention, and happy that you have sanctioned his work by your continued

presence and occasional applause. . . . He hopes, ladies and gentlemen, you will be enabled to say that he has at least fulfilled his opening promise, not to deceive you. . . . And . . .

Mr. Crockford. Blue fire, and drop?

Myself. Ought I to say any more?

Mr. Manners. To each and all, a fair good-night, and pleasant dreams, and [*Mr. Ellis (aside).* Luncheons light] slumbers bright.

Myself. This is nonsense.

Mr. Crockford. Have the blue fire now, sir?

Myself. No, Abel; thank you, we will have no blue fire.

Mr. Crockford. Then you must have a rhyme, sir, or something; we always had at Harbourford:

> "I'll guard thee, love, from every wrong,
> So love me little, love me long."

That's better than nothing, sir.

Mrs. Manners. Give each a line, and close with—

Mr. Manners. A good rattling break-down.

Myself. No, no, this is becoming foolish; and with all respect to you, my dear Manners, a trifle vulgar. Let me speak to the house. Ladies and gentlemen, our play is ended; if it has pleased you, be kind enough to recommend it to your friends, and believe me to be always your obliged [Orchestra: slow music, "Robin Adair"], obedient servant,

CHRISTOPHER KENRICK.

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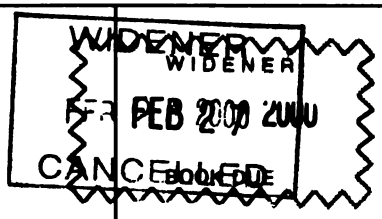

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